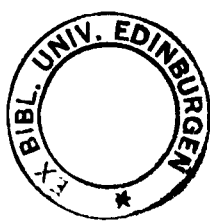


T H E S I S.

THE INFLUENCE, DIRECT and INDIRECT, of  
THE WRITINGS of ERSKINE of LINLATHEN  
on RELIGIOUS THOUGHT in SCOTLAND.

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This Thesis is an Estimate of the Influence of the Writings of Erskine of Linlathen on Religious Thought in Scotland.

Religious Thought is viewed in two aspects:- (1) as Scientific or Systematic Theology; (2) Religious Thought as it affects popular ideas. There is the Religious Thought of the Schools and of The Market Place.

To both these forms of thought, not different in kind but only in degree, Erskine brought enrichment and a fresh impulse. He restored the science of theology in the mind of his countrymen to its old and worthy position, for theology is a science of progress, not of stagnation. When Erskine gave his mind to the problems of religion he found that the expert and lay thinkers of the 19th. century were solving their problems in terms of 17th. century.

Erskine, though not an expert theologian, had a worthy conception of the theologian's task and a keen and intuitive notion of the power of clear thinking in the spread of the truth in the Gospel.

The Sovereignty of God dominated the Religious Thought of the 17th. century, but Erskine in his rediscovering of The Divine Fatherhood brought to the solution of religious questions a new spirit of inquiry. Mists surrounding the Divine Being were dispersed, and, by the implications of Fatherhood, there arose a reason for a review of the contents and meaning of The Trinity; further it became necessary to face the problem of Election, the nature of the Atonement, the meaning of Total Depravity, Imputation and Substitution.

These discussions brought other questions to the front, such as the nature of Revelation set forth in the Bible, and the problem of Universal Restoration, which to Erskine in the closing years of his life became the dominating thought of his heart.

On all these topics Erskine casts new light.

Further, Erskine, consciously or unconsciously, anticipated the age of scientific inquiry and criticism with their application also to religious thought, and furnished scientific and popular thought with a line of defence for "the faith once delivered to the saints". He rediscovered Conscience, in a fuller light than Butler; Erskine defined the boundaries of Faith and found in Consciousness a series of facts, which answered, in part, to similar facts and powers in God. Therefore, the inference is the Contents of Consciousness are as real as the Contents of Nature, made known to the mind by the senses, since Conscience and Faith are the moral and spiritual nerves of the soul.

The Thesis does not seek to show or prove that Erskine was a systematic theologian, equipped and capable to give a complete and reasoned presentation of Religious Thought.

Erskine was essentially a pioneer and a blazer of trails, along which the theological expert and popular teacher might travel towards truth and reality.

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, lawyer, <sup>(1)</sup> theological writer, landed proprietor and LL.D. of Edinburgh University, 1788-1870. The works or writings of Erskine are the following:- Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the truth of Revealed Religion. Waugh & Innes, Edinburgh, 1823: The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel. Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1873: The Brazen Serpent or Life coming through Death. Waugh & Innes, Edinburgh, 1831: The Doctrine of Election and its Connection with the General Tenor of Christianity. Douglas, 1878, Edinburgh: The Spiritual Order and Other Papers. Edmonston & Douglas, 1871: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Luck, 1830, Greenock: Introductory Essay to Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend. Luck, Greenock, 1830: Introductory Essay to the Works of Rev. John Gambold, A.M. Collins, Glasgow, 1822: Introductory Essay to the Letters of Samuel Rutherford. Collins, Glasgow, 1825: Letters of Thomas Erskine, 1877. (Hanna Douglas, Edinburgh).

For the purpose of the Thesis attention is mainly concentrated on the first six books and last work mentioned, and the dates given are those of the works consulted and read. These dates do not tally with those on first editions which are respectively 1820 Remarks; 1822 Essay on Faith; 1828 The Unconditional Freeness; 1831 The Brazen Serpent; 1837 The Doctrine of Election; 1871 The Spiritual Order.

It will be helpful in the search of an estimate of Erskine's influence, through his writings, on Religious Thought in Scotland to note some publishers' facts.

Erskine's works ran into several editions: "The Remarks", nine editions; Essay on Faith, five, and a French edition under the title "La Pleine Gratuite du Pardon", (Lausaune, 1874): /

(1)  
App. 1.

The Brazen Serpent, two editions; The Doctrine of Election, one edition, and two, at least, of The Spiritual Order. These several editions found their way also to England and America.

Is there direct evidence that Erskine's books were read in Scotland? <sup>(1)</sup> To judge from the absence of quotations, the answer up to a certain date is in the negative, <sup>(2)</sup> but, on the other hand, an inference may be drawn from the frequent direct and indirect denunciation of Erskine's views, that the leaven of his thoughts was at work.

Erskine for a period did not confine himself to the propagation of his views through the press only; he took to the platform and pulpit and was well-known to the groups or praying circles, which had their origin in a revolt from the apathy and moderatism of the Church of Scotland, and because of a desire for a warmer evangelic life.

This public work terminated somewhat abruptly, and the reasons assigned were lack of health and fitness because of nervousness. Perhaps, however, the main reason was Erskine's disappointment following on the deposition of McLeod Campbell, and the bitter spirit aroused by this untoward event in the history of religious life and thought in Scotland. At any rate, the fact remains that Erskine now gave himself to study, and sought to use his personal influence with individuals in sympathy with his outlook, and likely to advance the cause he had at heart.

In "An Individual Retrospect of Religious Thought of the 19th. century" (Expositor, September, 1901) a writer names the books read by his parents in an English home.

It is an interesting list and in reference to the books of his mother he writes, "besides a few old books, such as Cowper's /

(1) App. 16.

(2) App. 26; 35.

Cowper's Poems and Romaine's Letters, she loved, as did also my father, the earlier works of Thomas Erskine and "The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel" above the rest". Now what happened in England was surely certain also in Scottish homes. It was true of the manses at least. The second-hand book-stall helps us here, and, if the name and reputation of the former possessor <sup>(1)</sup> of the book is known, we seem to see some evidence of the influence of Erskine.

When Erskine entered upon his task there were certain conditions in the moral and spiritual life of Scotland, which meant to Erskine a call and a reason why he, through voice and pen, should come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Religious life and thought were at a low ebb. The church in Erskine's estimation was asleep, if not dead. Theology was no longer "Queen of the Sciences". Free-thought and atheism were rampant, more especially among the weaving population of the land. The Protestant Church to Erskine was little better than the Romish, for, if Rome stood for an infallible Pope, the Protestant held to an infallible Bible. It was this condition of affairs, irreligion on the one hand, and the denial of a place to reason and conscience on the other, that led Erskine to be a true knight-errant for the Kingdom of God in Scotland. He believed that in a true exposition of Christianity, and its powers, the unbeliever could not only be confuted, but convinced; and that in the Gospel there were the quickening elements to rescue a land perishing for the lack of living water and the good seed of the Word.

Erskine was a keen student of John Foster and shared some of that writer's fastidiousness in the treatment of religious topics, and the proper use of terms. Foster, too, /

(1)

Johnman of Hawick.  
Durward of Leven.



too, desired the restoration of the lost prestige of theology which had ceased, by the neglect even of the talent of style, to appeal to certain minds. Theology had fallen on evil days, for there were few thinkers and writers who could appeal to men so as to win, not only the praise of the common people, but also the attention of the thoughtful. There was insufficient emphasis placed on reason and conscience. Literary expression was not encouraged. It was even denounced in some Presbyteries.

Erskine, in his opening work, "Remarks on the Internal Evidence", showed originality of thought worthy of the great theme. He lifted theology out of a rut and proved, that in religious discussion and inquiry there was a place for reason and conscience, common-sense and human judgment. It is therefore not too much to say that Erskine's writings gave a new mental turn and fresh expression to religious thought in Scotland.

The theology with which Erskine was first acquainted was a science, cribbed, cabined and confined. Thought, to many, had ceased with the Westminster Confession. Calvinism with its relentless logic ruled religious thought in Scotland. (1) An effort, made by the "Marrow" seemed at first to offer the water of life, but only to withdraw it again from the thirsty. It was the ambition of Erskine to change all this. Both in his letters, and works he sought to win men of thought for the Kingdom of God, and through their help to capture the many for righteousness. In part he was successful. Some of the ablest thinkers in Scotland turned aside from their ordinary tasks to discuss the questions which occupied the mind of Erskine. In his "Essays in Philosophy" (Hamilton, Adams & Company, London, 1856), Professor /

(1) App. 7.

Professor Campbell Fraser has an illuminating article on the "Metaphysics of Augustinianism".<sup>(1)</sup> Metaphysics to Erskine could not solve his problems, but his problems had also become the problems of others. Erskine had sounded the challenge. He had called forth the efforts of the best to defend the old stand-point, as well as enlisting others, outside theological schools, to face the difficulties implied in Calvinism. Erskine by word and pen had sown the seed; and certainly there were signs of results.

In the volume just mentioned there are words which might have come from the pen of Erskine, for the principles stated are those which he had reiterated; "If the limits of human thought do not hinder the success of attempts to explain the phenomena of the starry heavens and the race of man, how are they less consistent with endeavours to explain the mysteries of Creation, Providence and Grace?" pp. 248, and again, "These views invest sound theological studies, and contemplation with an intellectual dignity which was recognised in former ages by the highest spirits of the human race; and we cannot but deplore that this sublime region is often disturbed by the disputes of perverted metaphysics and the ignorant intolerance of sectarian zeal". "We fear that devotion to theology cannot be affirmed of this age and country, when we witness the bigoted aversion of our men of letters to its very name, and also the meagre current literature, which that illustrious name now represents". In the closing words of Professor Fraser's article he says, "Let us trust that a deeper and more comprehensive mode of viewing this and other theological questions may continue to prevail, nor do we exclude Scotland from our hope, if the large religious spirit of Chalmers is permitted to retain its liberal and benignant spirit".

(1) App. 29.

The literature of theology in Scotland, might be meagre so far as lay-writers were concerned, but how much more scanty the output would have been, even with the inclusion of the writings of experts, were it not for the works of Erskine!

The theologians of the early part of the 19th. century moved in a circle. Within the circle there were those who desired a way out, and others outside that circle who longed to break down the barriers, or creeds. Erskine was of this second class, but the numbers were few. However, in 1826 there was a mind, akin to Erskine's, belonging to the inside of the circle who began to work his way out. This was John McLeod Campbell, who, in a letter dated February 15, 1826, <sup>(1)</sup> wrote, "I have lately been reading a book which I shall take home with me, Erskine's 'Internal Evidence' which is the only book with that title which deserves the name, as it is really an extracting of evidence from the peculiarities of the scheme itself; and in it a topic, on which we once had some conversation, is put upon its proper basis - I mean the connection between the doctrines and morality of the Gospel ..... I have daily many proofs that no one will ever have a sufficiently high standard of morality who does not rest exclusively on the merits of Christ. Such a one sees no limit to duty and - to use a comparison of your own in your Synod sermon - actually 'shoots at the heavens'; whereas, while there is any trusting to our own merits, there is constant lowering of the Divine requirements such a lowering as is necessary in order to our feeling that we have any merit".

Erskine tells us that McLeod Campbell reached his positions in theology apart from anything "in the way of influence by Erskine". Perhaps that is Erskine's chivalry. The Remarks /

(1) Reminiscences, etc., p. 16.

Remarks on the Internal Evidence had in embryo many of the positions which Erskine developed at greater length, and whilst perhaps it may not be inferred that Erskine was the inspirer of the great truths associated with the name of McLeod Campbell, this, at least, is certain, Erskine had given these truths their first tentative form and so had confirmed Campbell's outlook. It is also of interest to note that the respective dates of "The Remarks on the Internal Evidence" and the "Essay on Faith" are 1820 and 1822. The date of the letter from which the above extract is taken is 1826.

C H A P T E R    I .

AN APPRECIATION of "REMARKS on the INTERNAL EVIDENCE  
for the TRUTH of REVEALED RELIGION". THOMAS ERSKINE.

WAUGH & INNES, EDINBURGH, 1823.

Thomas Erskine at the age of twenty-three, in contact with the society of that time, composed of such learned men as Jeffrey, Cockburn and Fullerton, began to doubt the supernatural and miraculous in the religion of his early years. "Through a patient study of the Christian religion, revealed in the Bible, its place in history, and the satisfaction which it gave to reason and brought to conscience, the peace and happiness it afforded the troubled heart, he reached firm ground". It was out of this moral and spiritual conflict there was given to the reading public of his day the work under consideration.

The purpose of the book was not to astonish the world with some new discovery. Erskine discounts such an intention. "There is nothing new", he writes, "in this cursory sketch of Christian doctrines", and adds, "indeed, I should conceive a proof of novelty on such a subject as tantamount to a proof of error". The intention of the author was not so much to confute and confound the critic, sceptic and rationalist as to promote personal religion in the hearts of his readers. He desired, "to present evidence in itself well-fitted for preparing and disposing the unbeliever to examine with candour the more direct proof, which arises from historical testimony ..... and it may also perform the no less important office of infusing into a nominal Christian a doubt as to his sincerity in the profession of a faith which has perhaps neither made a distinct impression on his understanding, nor touched his heart, nor affected his character". The remarks emphasise two principles which Erskine regarded as vital. The first of these is the redemption of the world was worthy of the Creator. Secondly that for man free forgiveness on the part of God is the only effective dynamic by which character is developed and attained. These two standpoints, shown afterwards to be verified in Christian experience, /

experience, shed a light and establish the purpose of the Gospel, and take Christian doctrines out of the region of the abstract and set them in the love of God through the Eternal Son and apply them to the clamant needs of frail humanity. It is evident all through this first book that the writer is not satisfied with the traditional dogmatic but yet, not to such an extent, as to cast himself free altogether of these positions.

The book was eagerly read at home, in America and on the Continent. Edition after edition was called for. At first its full import was not understood but history shows it was the effort of a mind anticipating not only a new age in religious thought but also the effects of new forces begotten of scientific inquiry on other forms of thought, which had exercised the minds of seekers after truth.

Erskine was a pioneer in religious development and a stout defender of the faith. He warned men of the advent of searching times against which the orthodox beliefs would be but a frail barrier. Few will deny that Erskine was a blazer of paths, or a path in which men found a place from which successfully to defend the faith. And perhaps it was well and fortunate that from a heart saturated with divine truth, not as a theory only but above all a life, there should come the warning of attack, the methods of defence, and the assurance that in the conflict good would come to the Christian cause.

It is very certain that in the Remarks we have the germs of those truths, which Erskine so consistently set forth and valiently defended in after years. There is The Fatherhood of God, Election, Atonement, Brotherhood, Inspiration, Revelation, and Final Restoration. Erskine's ideas on these topics are as yet tentative, only hints, but in days to come these became vital issues for which Erskine stood /



stood with conspicuous determination. It is impossible to sever the personality of the man from his writings; his message held him captive, and absorbed all his energies. Erskine breathed the atmosphere of the Spirit. The most natural thing to him was his religion. The flower was not more in accord with beauty than Erskine with grace and love. Religion was as natural to Erskine as laughter to a child. In the Remarks there is the patience of thought and the wrestling of a mind, never satisfied with the terms of forms in which expression to the thought is found. There is also the sweet reasonableness of one not altogether fit by nature or spirit for polemics; and yet Erskine as teacher and critic was able to strike many shrewd blows for the truth which to Erskine's mind had been badly mangled in the house of her friends and therefore by those who should have known better.

The introductory chapter of itself lends colour to the statement that "as an interpreter of the psychological conditions which correspond with the doctrines of grace Erskine is unrivalled". The reader of the Remarks cannot fail to perceive how adequately, and with what ease, the writer deals with the powers and contents of the mind. In Psychology he is far advanced of any other teacher or writer of his time. The very simplicity of his similies and illustrations reveal the subtility of Erskine's logic and knowledge. On p. 2. we read ..... "Thus if we hear that a friend, in whose integrity we have perfect confidence, has committed a dishonest action, we place our former knowledge of our friend in opposition to the testimony of our informer and we anxiously look for an explanation. Before our minds are easy on the subject, we must either discover some circumstance in the action which may bring it under the general principle which we have formed in regard to his character, or else we must form to ourselves some new general principle which will explain it. We reason /

reason in the same way of the intelligence of actions as we do of their morality. We reason in this case from cause to effect; and we conclude that a strong intelligence, when combined with a desire after a particular object, will form and execute some plan adapted to the accomplishment of that particular object. Surely, then, in a system which purports to be a revelation from heaven and to contain a history of God's dealings with men and to develop truths with regard to the moral government of the universe, the knowledge and belief of which will lead to happiness here and hereafter, we may expect to find (if its pretensions are well founded) an evidence of its truth which shall be independent of all external testimony". The same ability to deal with the facts of the soul appear on page 20. "I mean to show there is an intelligible and necessary connection between the doctrinal facts of revelation and the character of God (as deduced from Natural Religion) in the same way as there is an intelligible and necessary connection between the character of man and his most characteristic actions; and farther, that the belief of these doctrinal facts has an intelligible and necessary tendency to produce the Christian character, in the same way that the belief of danger has an intelligible and necessary tendency to produce fear". Again on page 23 the same intuitive power is seen and the faculty to correlate subject and object is apparent ..... "the first reasonable test of the truth of a religion is that it should coincide with the moral constitution of the human mind ..... the second test then, of the truth of a religion is that it should coincide with the physical constitution of the human mind, and the third test is that it should coincide with the circumstances in which man is found in the world". Butler's method in The Analogy follows a different line from that of the Remarks. In the former the difficulties in the Christian religion are similar to /

to those in natural religion and of providence, whereas Erskine seeks to establish the relation existing between the facts of natural religion and the doctrines of Christianity. The method was new and original, but not much in favour with those, who staked the credibility of the Christian religion on the miraculous in the Bible. Even Chalmers doubted somewhat the advisability of Erskine's method. And orthodoxy, as represented by the Haldanes, was both suspicious and critical. For the orthodox the inferences and findings of the Remarks were not positive enough; the theory of the atonement, it was averred, was one-sided more subjective than objective. It was from these divergences of view there began the long conflict in which Erskine joined, and, by voice and pen, did much to turn the hearts and minds of men to a more winsome outlook than that of the orthodox dogmatic of his day.

The purpose of Christianity according to the Remarks is to establish true relations between God and man, and, to do this in such a way that the character of man will reflect the character of God. Man is so constituted that it is possible for him to reflect the character of God; that is to express in his life the laws, and principles, which regulate the divine life. That reflection can never be perfect, for the finite always comes short of the infinite. The first principle of the Remarks was a call to men, if not to get back to Christ, at least back to the fundamentals of their own nature through which man is capable of realising the glory of God as revealed in Scripture. But what does man know of the character of God? - without such a knowledge it will be impossible for mankind to advance in moral and spiritual grace. It was necessary, therefore, that Christianity should set forth the divine character in such a way that man, according to his capacity and power, was able /

able to receive and understand. Natural religion made up of inferences from the world of Nature was not sufficient. The teachings of providence, and conscience, parts of natural religion, also fell short. The heart of man did not find satisfaction in natural religion, not because, 'it must be observed, of any defect in the knowledge supplied, but, simply because the human heart cannot live by abstract truth alone. The theories of philosophy, too, are unsatisfying, and so Christianity comes to us in the revealed word, and finally in the "Word, who became flesh", since it is only in Jesus Christ that mankind sees perfectly the character of God and perceives the graces, which man, by faith and through the operation of the Holy Spirit, may have in his character and experience. The fact of Christ is not just the details of that wonderful life and ministry, but along with these a power and dynamic which, given an opportunity, will renew and transform, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, the whole nature of man. Christianity, therefore, is superior to natural religion, even the revelation of God in the natural conscience which, had it power equal to its authority, would rule the world of mankind. Now this power lacking in conscience is inherent in Christ, the Representative and Head of the race. In the words of Erskine "Christianity presents a history of wondrous love, in order to excite gratitude; of high and holy worth to attract veneration and esteem. It presents a view of danger to produce alarm, of refuge to confer peace and joy, and of eternal glory to animate hope".

These principles Erskine set forth very strikingly in a style altogether different from other theological works of that time. The style is often involved and complicated, but, if anyone was fastidious, that writer was Erskine. In the principles of the Remarks, Erskine is evidently determined to throw himself loose from the thralldom of the past, which /

which seemed to decree that development in religious thought was not only impossible, but even undesirable. In this first book Erskine does much to rescue theological discussion from incompetency, and to restore theology to her old position as "Queen of the sciences".

The author was a diligent student of John Foster who was animated with the same purpose. The Remarks appeal to all sorts and conditions of readers. The mystic will find in the book that there is mysticism in Calvinism. The modern psychologist will discover an author who anticipates the discoveries of modern times, and ridicules some of the grotesque findings of later research. Even the romantic will find in Erskine's work the spirit of the "knight-errant". The thoughtful reader will discover, as in a flashlight, some new vista in a striking aphorism. The style is the man. Cheap unction is not to be found in the works of Erskine. Perhaps it is in those flashes of thought we see the genius of Erskine at its best. Thus he says, "by moral perfection, I mean the perception of what is right, followed by the love of it, and the doing of it". At another time, laying aside the ordinary religious phraseology, he speaks of "the need that men have for some system of spiritual renovation". Very illuminating is the statement that "the testimony of conscience is that verdict, which every man returns for or against himself upon the question, whether his moral character has kept pace with his moral judgment". A world of experience lies behind the words, "there are so many shelters to which men betake themselves, when pursued by the justice or injustice of their fellow-creatures". To Erskine "the doctrines or acts ought to tally with the precepts". How natural are the words, "we measure affection by the sacrifice which it is prepared to make, and the resistance which it overcomes!" Light is cast on the words, "the pure in heart shall /

shall see God", by the assertion of Erskine, "our apprehension of abstract truths in morality is so vague that they hardly operate on our characters at all".

Why? - "and the reason seems to be that it (Christianity) is not a science merely, but a practical art, in which every part of knowledge is connected with a corresponding duty; men do not look very diligently for that which they would be sorry to find". Erskine was not oblivious to the state of religious life within the church of his day, and, the dire effect this condition of affairs meant for the spread of the Evangel. The sorrow of a good man's heart is surely in the words, "the great argument for the truth of Christianity lies in the sanctifying influence of its doctrines; and alas, the great argument against it lies in the unsanctified lives of its professors!" How eagerly Erskine desired emphasis should be laid on the declaration of a Gospel with power! Where this is neglected he deplores the fact in the words, "he (the preacher) lays aside that weapon of ethereal temper, which God has chosen out of the armoury of heaven, and which He blessed and sanctified for the destruction of moral evil, and goes forth to encounter the powers of darkness without a single well-grounded hope of success".

Erskine was not one who was always yearning for some new thing or doctrine. He was no setter-forth of strange gods. The past comes to him with instruction, and warning. Truth was built on former discoveries. Character is the result of habit, which began in a single act. "We judge", he says, "of the probability or improbability of a new idea by comparing it with those things which we are already acquainted with, and observing how it fits in with them". No wonder Newman, though condemning the Remarks, thought it probable that the writer was better than his creed!

The message of this first book of Erskine is for every age. Religion, both natural and revealed, "fits into all the folds of a man's being". These revelations of the Divine Being do not find their realisation in the wranglings of sects, or in the disputes of the schools, but in lives transformed and renewed by power from the very heart of the Eternal Himself. This transformation is a slow process, for man's development in righteousness is an education, slow and oft-times painful, for man is not matter, but a living and energising soul. Men, in the days of Erskine, as now, were unwilling to learn. The Evangel has often been travestied and discipline has been misguided. In Scotland, when Erskine began to write, Religion was buried beneath dogmatic formulae, which, men would not see, were therefore destroying the spirit behind all formulae. The religion perfected in the cross was seen through the mists of tradition and prejudice, ignorance and superstition.

There was a rich heritage offered to men in the revelation of nature, conscience, and providence, but supremely in Jesus Christ, whose teaching illumined all other revelations, and added to these also a dynamic. It was, however, in Erskine's day as in the time of Christ, "men loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil".

The Remarks do not leave the reader in doubt concerning the place occupied by Christ in the scheme of revealed truth. The details of the death of Christ witness to the importance of the suffering sacrifice made by our Lord. The Remarks emphasise its moral and subjective aspect, rather than from the legal and objective side, though the latter was not neglected. The Son of God drank to the bitter dregs the cup of the world's failure. He endured the contradiction of sinners because He stood as the Representative of mankind. For guilt there was the offer of freedom from sin and victory over evil. It must be observed, therefore, that in all this discussion /

discussion Erskine was advancing to new ground; he was breaking with the past, and finding in the atonement a height, and depth, a length and breadth, which alienated from his side the orthodox writers and teachers of his day. But whilst widening the popular conception of the atonement, and calling for the verification of the Christian faith in experience, and character, Erskine still held to penal substitution, and, therefore, saw the reality and power of law above, and over God, or behind Him. Perhaps his sympathy with hearts slower than his own, lead Erskine only to adumbrate in the Remarks what he afterwards fully expounded in his second book, "An Essay on Faith". The power of the Gospel as seen by Erskine differs from the view-point of Paul to whom the Gospel was something new, unheard of before, whereas, for Erskine, the Evangel was something natural and in all stages of promise and fulfilment alike, was fitted to meet the end and demand in view. Did the different outlook on the power of the Cross add to, or take from, the efficiency of either the greatest of the Apostles, or of Erskine the saint and mystic?

The physical law of gravitation furnishes Erskine with a striking analogy of the principle which governs moral and spiritual phenomena.

Suppose one of the planets diverged from its orbit, then there would be confusion and ultimate disaster, but, if the planet had a soul and could ask, How can I get back to my true orbit?, would not the true answer be an assurance of safety, if only again there was direct and constant concentration on the central force which keeps order in the heavens? So in moral and spiritual things. Man has turned away from truth. God has placed man in a certain course. Man, however, has placed himself above God and the divine law. Sin has entered. Aberration from the course has taken place. Chaos threatens.

Man /



Man builds his house in obedience to the law of gravitation in order to avoid disaster from wind and spate, but, he allows his character - the spiritual temple - to be destroyed by lawlessness in thought and action. Righteousness is man's true orbit which can only be kept through man's continuous dependence on the power of the Sun of Righteousness.

It can be affirmed with all certainty this first work of Erskine is a useful apologetic for the faithful in every generation. For Erskine Christianity is the supreme religion. It satisfies not only reason, but, what to Erskine was more important, it also satisfies conscience. It is in this exaltation of conscience over logic, of inward experience over theory, that gives to the Evangel, as understood by Erskine, a power, which, Calvinism, with all its dynamic, for dynamic it really had, did not and could not possess.

In Calvinism God existed, but man in the extreme view of Calvinists scarcely existed, if, indeed, he existed at all.

In the Remarks we have the effort of one who endeavours to point out how man's heritage and privilege may be restored. To all lovers of truth Erskine, the pioneer and "knight-errant", brought the spirit of inquiry, the call of freedom, and an original and fresh vision. Not the least of the contributions of The Remarks is Erskine's handling of Bible truths. The Bible is not to him what the Pope is to a Roman Catholic. The revealed word forms a study for the exercise of faith, common sense and judgment. Hence in familiar words Erskine is able to see new meanings and blessings. The restoration of conscience to its rightful place is a great gain. And of conscience Erskine is very sure. It is for him the thread from which hang pearls and precious stones. The evidence, which conscience brings, is as real as nature in sea and land to us when these phenomena are seen in the light of common day. He does not reason himself into this belief. What /

What the nerves are to the body, that also is conscience to the soul. Conscience is as real to Erskine as his own existence. It is no taper light, it is no dim religious light. It is no faint voice from afar. Conscience is the voice of God, or, as Erskine afterwards asserts, God Himself abiding in the human heart.

AN APPRECIATION on AN ESSAY on FAITH

by THOMAS ERSKINE.

WAUGH & INNES, EDINBURGH, 1825.

An earlier edition of this work had been much criticised. It was asserted there were evidences of confused arrangement, the logic was at fault, and old and familiar truths travestied. It was to meet these criticisms that Erskine revised and re-wrote the Essay on Faith. Evidently some of the criticism was of a captious nature, for there is just a soupçon of impatience in the following words of Erskine. "I do not think that any reader of the edition will suppose I consider a man entitled to reject the doctrines of the Bible because he cannot explain them, or that I held Christian faith to be mere assent to the terms of a proposition".

What led Erskine to publish his thoughts on religion to the world? He desired to simplify the Gospel by freeing the divine message from the network of the logician. Religion, hitherto, in Scotland and elsewhere was too much a Gospel of logic, whereas, Erskine viewed the Evangel in terms of the heart. Calvinism had made the Gospel a message of Sovereignty, but Erskine, whilst not denying a place to Divine Sovereignty, emphasised the Divine Love. This love was so clear and simple that even the man running past the notice-board might read and understand.

The Essay on Faith at times is obscure, but it betrays no lack of patience in pursuit of truth. The Essay is a product of the heart, and is among the simplest of the works of Erskine. The illustrations from the classics cast a light on one of the author's obiter dicta that had he been endowed with health and eyesight he might have been a learned man. He had something better, intuitive genius. Another reason for this little book was his desire, begotten from a profound experience of the love of God, to share his gift with others. "That love", as one has said, "had come to him with a power and totality of conviction which it is given to few to realise".

Erskine found in the Scriptures different definitions, or descriptions of faith, and hence the precise meaning must be set out to avoid mistakes. This effort to reach an understanding of the term was not a needless bit of work. The need for such an inquiry was all the more apparent when it was held that eternal happiness and eternal misery was involved, in the possession or non-possession of faith. The purpose of the book is to explain the rank of faith in the Christian system by showing its natural relation to the human faculties and its influence on human character.

To some, faith was a symbolic expression for the whole regenerate character, just as unbelief was taken by others to represent all vices. Again faith stood as one of two necessary conditions of pardon, the other obedience, and the absence of either made the other nugatory and effectively excluded from the divine favour.

How could these two views be reconciled or explained? The only form of reconciliation was clear enough to Erskine, who says, faith was belief, and belief developing through obedience unto holiness, whereas others disparged holiness, and obedience, and regarded faith only as the channel of Justification, merely in virtue of an arbitrary appointment of God without any reference to its moral effect on the human character.

There was evidently a fallacy in the idea that the belief of facts is always independent of the will, or moral state of the mind and therefore out of the reach of praise or blame. When a fact is closely related to a general principle the fact is affected by our view of the principle. This explains the diversity of beliefs among politicians and moralists. Nero, because of his character, could not understand the gentleness of Codrus. Now, the special feature about the facts of the Bible is that these facts are vitally connected /

connected with moral principles, and therefore belief in the facts is affected by the appreciation or otherwise of the principles. Hence there is a close relation between belief and character. This is at the basis of the declaration of Jesus "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil". Faith, then, is connected with Justification, and has a direct bearing on Sanctification. There is no merit in the former, i.e. from works, whereas, in regard to Sanctification, Faith is said to purify the heart, to work by love, and to overcome the world. There was danger, then, both in the view of the hyper-evangelical and the moderate. It is equally erroneous to say either that faith produces justification as the cause of deliverance, or to affirm there is merit in faith by works. Trying to conquer sin will not bring victory over evil. To hate sin is not to overcome it: only belief in the love of God to sinners as seen in the cross can accomplish this change. Faith is not that with which we can purchase Justification; and faith is not a work. These errors lead to spiritual pride, which means we trust to our own faith and work to elevate us, rather than in the cross to humble us. Faith, too, is often misunderstood when emphasis is laid on the act of belief rather than on the object believed. Reason has no place in the presence of Divine authority. There could be no allowance for doubts in regard to the contents of the Bible. The words of Isaiah "Come let us reason saith the Lord" were set aside in orthodox belief, and the saying of Jesus, "Judge ye", was ignored. Such a line of argument was not honouring but "dishonouring to God, and derogatory to an intelligent Being who teacheth man knowledge". Faith without the understanding is an error, no less is pardon as the reward for believing, or for doing anything else. Pardon, comes only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. What then /

then is the use of faith? What is its relation to pardon? The curse of sin involves the thoughts and feelings. These are disorder. Pardon therefore must reach the thoughts and feelings. How? By opening the being to the character of God. This subtle dialectic of Erskine was called forth because of the religious errors of his day, when authority eclipsed fatherhood, and where religion was more a matter of the intellect than of the heart. Religion then was doctrine not life. The fact of the atonement is a revelation of the love of God for all mankind, but, so far as the orthodox view was concerned, it failed to give a true conception of the Divine Nature. Justice was emphasised but the love of God passed over. The new evangelism had a place for love in its teaching, but that love was more a matter of the will than of the character in God. The working out of the principle implied in the words "out of his mere good pleasure" was therefore of such a nature as to have no direct influence on the character of man.

Erskine's view of the atonement was wider than that in the minds of the reformers, who based the atonement on the justice of God which to them also was the proof of the Christian religion.

It is quite evident that Erskine was moving to new ground when he states in regard to the atonement, first, that it rests on the character of God, and secondly, that the atonement produces character in man. For Erskine religious experience verifies the doctrines of Christianity, and he emphasises the necessity for Christianity to be powerful in the building up of Character. It is when he continues to hold by the doctrines of penal substitution he proves he is either not conscious of the difficulty and inconsistency or he is anxious not to be unmindful of his weaker brethren.

What /

What then is Faith? How shall we define or describe it? It is an appanage to those faculties through whose powers we receive material or immaterial impressions. Faith stands at the entrance of mind and stamps with authenticity all information that goes in. Faith, therefore, cannot exist or sanction with authenticity information unless the informing faculty exists. To a blind man light cannot be a matter of faith according to the definition of Erskine. If an impression of a real object is produced there must be persuasion of reality. So it is with the mathematician. He must have a sense of numbers. So it is with knowledge and belief of subjects that come before our moral faculties. As we have outward senses to receive impressions from the outward qualities of things, so the inner qualities of things, their spirit and meaning are received by the inward sense. To Erskine, therefore, the soul of man had powers corresponding to the nerves of the body. Each sense in the body must do its own work. The external in like manner cannot take the place of the internal or spiritual.

As we become acquainted with the concepts fear and danger so we know moral and spiritual worth. In morals, Erskine says, we only know what we feel.

In the Gospel, therefore, facts are set forth to establish the relation of the Divine to the human and so impressions of the facts must be made on our internal senses corresponding to the moral meaning, which constitutes their whole value and importance as a message from God. The centre of revelation is the death of Christ. The love of God appeals to conscience for to conscience evil is a stern reality. Man's affections are touched in view of the boundless nature of God's love. The human imagination is quickened in the call or urge of eternity. Man's sense of preservation, or, as Erskine calls it, our prudential judgment is /



is aroused to value everlasting life over against perishing miserably. The love of God in the atonement is immeasurable, but along with that love there is the expression of a heart set on holiness, which required the sacrifice of the Son. Sin is departure from God and implies misery; union with God through willingness to see things in the light of the Eternal is happiness. We must understand these Gospel truths in order to believe them and we must feel them in order to understand them. There are, however, hindrances in the way - a polluted conscience and disordered affections. Added to these hindrances mere assent to a truth or a doctrine, to a creed or a form, cannot bring the salutary blessings of the cross. It is not enough to say, "This man doeth many miracles". We must also be in full sympathy with the Spirit of Jesus, who so acts. To hold simply as a creed the doctrines of the Trinity can never bring to the heart all the implications of the Trinity.

Is faith the result of character instead of being the cause and former of character? Erskine says both. The objects of faith do not create faculties in the mind which did not previously exist there, but these objects rouse, awaken, call into action, direct and make virile the faculties which they find there. Hence to turn a wrong feeling or a feeling from a wrong direction to what is a right course there must be the exciting object. This exciting object is the love of God, but various terms were applied to faith, which might be technical, speculative, historical, saving and realising. Hence the heart was not occupied with or centred on God, who hates sin and loves the sinner. In other words, there was much fruitless examination of the mental operation of believing: The question of faith being the right kind occupied the mind more than the question, Do I believe the right thing? To Erskine the Bible was a practical /

practical book. So practical is the Bible that it never supposes it possible for a man to be ignorant or in doubt, whether he really believes or not. Abstract belief in God leads nowhere. Belief in the moral character of God alone influences character. The question therefore is not - do we believe in the Trinity? but, how do we stand in regard to this one Being? How does He regard us? What does He love and what does He hate? The reality of God for Erskine does not rest on the ontological proof but on Fatherhood, expressed supremely in the revelation of the Eternal Son, and completed in the work of the Holy Spirit.

To Erskine the objects of religion were not revealed to us to sharpen our faculties by observing how they are fitted to impress the mind, but, rather, that our minds might be impressed by them with the character of happiness and holiness. It is not an easy thing to examine the various aspects of conduct or to look into self. There is a difference between studying the emotions of the mind and looking on a landscape, and allowing the vision to enter with its contents into the mind or soul. Contemplation of the delightful object and not knowing how we enjoy it is the test. This does not mean that Erskine was averse to self-examination - no one was more faithful - but his mind felt it is not how we believe, but what we believe that is the important thing. Men will wrangle about religion, dispute about it, suffer for it - anything but live it. This attitude of Erskine was also the expressed opinion of Coleridge, who, in his "Aids to Reflection", says "Christianity is not a theory, or a speculation, but a life; not a philosophy of life but life, and a living process".

To have faith in a thing - to believe a thing - and to understand a thing, as a truth, are expressions of equal value. Four merchants receive advice from a foreign correspondent, /

correspondent, but each one of these merchants, treats the information in different ways. One, indeed, does not read the letter. So those, who do not believe the Bible - the word given by God to successive generations as man was able to understand the mind and heart of God - and finally, The Word set forth in the "Word made flesh", therefore finds no place in the reasoning of Scripture for them. It is so also with nominal Christians.

Understanding demanded by Philip of the Ethiopian, Acts 8-30, and by our Lord in the parable of the sower, Matthew 13-19, is not knowledge in the abstract, but when separated from the object believed, or from the object of knowledge. This is not a case of setting reason above revelation, but that divine revelation in a practical and intelligent way is addressed to human reason and feeling; and it is the duty of man to bring his reason and feelings into contact with divine revelation.

This divine purpose in revelation is reached when man sees the connection between it and the Divine Being, who gave it even although man may not be able to understand all that is in revelation. The atonement, for instance, exhibits the infinite compassion and holiness of God, and has a most powerful tendency to humble, and purify and elevate the human heart. Erskine makes no restrictions in his doctrine of Election. All are included. The orthodox method was to summon sinners to believe but at the same time were taught that God's purpose of mercy was only for certain elect and chosen people. What am I to believe? men asked; and how can I believe God loves me after I have believed? These difficulties Erskine solved by teaching that all men were pardoned, whether they believed or not; that those who did believe it were sanctified and saved by believing it; and that those who did not believe were, in the long run, condemned, not as sinners, but as unconverted persons. Faith is /

is said to justify because it sanctifies. The basis of the atonement in the Divine nature is the necessity to satisfy justice. In all this Erskine is sound so far as orthodoxy is concerned in regard to substitution. It is the influence of free forgiveness on human character that gives to the atonement its practical value and its internal evidence. The depraved are less susceptible to this love, and yet the Gospel is related in a unique way to the hearts of the most sinful, for the image of God in the human heart is never wholly lost. With God also is the power to send awakening messengers of sorrow or fear. The Eternal devises means to bring back His own to Himself. Appeals are fitted for different varieties of character. If the unbeliever is not awakened by conscience, which to Erskine was the great illuminator, then the reasonableness of the system of Christianity may appeal to the understanding, as in modern days, the unchangeable words of Christ in contrast with the oft-times changed terminology of science, appealed to George Romanes. Such, however, cannot be taken for substitutes to the impression of the love and holiness of God and of the Gospel, but only as fore-runners to the full acceptance of the atonement in all its holiness.

Faith and Sanctification depend on each other for growth, even as the strength on use, for one moral truth acting on the moral nature makes it easier for the mind to accept another. It was the possession of faith by Simeon, the sentinel, and Anna the prophetess that enabled them to see in the infant of days the revealed glory of Israel, just as it was that faith in material things blinded the majority of the chosen nation. Even pagans with only a rudimentary faith believed. It is knowledge of guilt and the helplessness on man's part in face of that guilt which must be believed.

This /

This was the protest which Erskine made in behalf of the Evangel in opposition to the paganism of moderatism, and the mockery of a free love, which yet "out of mere good pleasure" elects some, and casts others aside. Moderatism was like a laid but unlit fire, and the new Evangelism was like a heart lacking love.

The aphorisms of Erskine in dealing with this part of the topic are striking and memorable. "Precept", he says, "is cold and joyless". "The word may be believed yet the Gospel not believed". "The purest heart has the most correct faith". "Not logic but vivid impressions". "A holy mind delights and feeds on holy things". "Perfect faith supposes perfect sanctification and perfect sanctification supposes perfect faith". It is in such quotations that we see how Erskine, though he claims no traffic with metaphysic or mysticism, is yet the best exponent of the mysticism of Calvinism, whilst preserving also all that is best in Quietism. It is not as God revolving thought on thought, heedless of the needs of men, that the Divine Creator reveals Himself. Quietism is at fault in the neglect of the Word revealed, even as Rome is, when it seals up the Bible and makes ultimate appeal to the teaching of the Church.

The simplicity and freeness of the Gospel Erskine sums up in these words, "to change our former views for those which the Gospel presents to us". "The Gospel is not a philosophical theory". "It is not moral mechanism without power". "For sinful man the Gospel is a necessity". "The doctrine of the atonement is a mould in which Christian character is shaped". "The Gospel to some may only be a matter of contention". "This attitude", says Erskine, "deserves the hardest of all condemnation". "Defects in character originate in corresponding defects in faith". It would be very difficult to find in any other religious manual so many striking aphoristic phrases that so aptly deal /

deal with the human soul. We owe much to Erskine for riding the marches of faith, and doing all this in such a way as to anticipate the many curious assertions of modern Psychology.

The efficacy of the atonement is achieved through contact with God in Prayer, and prayer is not isolated acts, but a manner of existence. We know we can speak to God and that certainly we are heard of Him; but when Erskine says prayer means, "the eyes of our soul fixed on the face of our Redeemer", we realise that Erskine was not only a saint but also a mystic of the same school as Jeanne Guyon. In prayer no limit must be put to our desires. Human efforts, alone, after holiness are absolutely inefficient. God will not fail us. If faith is for us an essential element, then the Bible will be to us always as a book just fresh from the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Such is the richness of expression and the virility of thought in The Essay on Faith, that the only inference, is, we are dealing with the work of a master mind, who moved among the contents of the human heart with the assurance of one able to pursue a thought to its utmost limit and to express the result in language that recalls the seraphic language of the prophets of Israel. There is perhaps too much of the subjective in the description of faith given by Erskine for the ordinary man. The modern mind, at least, craves for the objective, if there is a desire at all. Again Erskine, in his anxiety to simplify the Gospel, brings himself into some doubtful positions. He speaks of man's predispositions, and aversions to God as painful, but is this form of stating the guilt of man as emphatic as we find it set forth in the revealed word?

Erskine, though a powerful logician, makes more of intuition than of logic; indeed, he seems to feel at times that he trusted too much to intuition. "This view", he says, "may be bad logic; that may pass with a friend I know it to be true".

The development of Erskine's mind and thought can be seen from this fact. In The Essay on Faith stress is laid on happiness and self-preservation as the means of bringing the heart of man to realise the truth of the divine character as a purifying influence. The Gospel was a message of joy. Sin was failure to reach either true happiness or joy. Sin therefore was a painful fact standing between man and God. What of man's guilt and what of the measure of man, repentance? Latterly through the stress and strain of experience he saw another element deeper than happiness. This was sacrifice.

Erskine is emphatic in regard to conscience and in this is he on as sure ground as the reformers on personal faith or a personal Saviour - Jesus Christ?

APPRECIATION of THE UNCONDITIONAL FREENESS of

THE GOSPEL, by THOMAS ERSKINE, LINLATHEN.

EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS, EDINBURGH, 1873.



Gratuitous salvation is involved in difficulties when there is attached to it the necessity for belief; and, if faith and holiness are not conditions of salvation, where is their place in Christian doctrines? Without belief Christian doctrine is useless and, if the doctrines of Christianity fail to produce holiness, it also is of no avail. Conditions and gratuitousness are contradictions.

Such questions and speculations have no influence with those who recognise no incongruity of thought in this connection. They hold the light, and rejoice in its blessings. They are not disturbed by such speculations. Erskine does not condemn such, on the contrary, he says he has much to learn from them. There are those, however, who seek for the synthesis of things. And religion makes its appeal to all sorts and conditions of people. From his experience Erskine affirms there are those, who have suffered - even Christians - much perplexity in regard to the dilemma of freeness which is conditioned.

It is not our future state that is in question so much as our moral and spiritual temperature. The believer's blessing will be when the words are fulfilled, "We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is". Evidently then the believer must begin here, and now to be like Christ. Salvation then is not a thing of place and time. Heaven, or, as Erskine puts it, moral and spiritual health, begins here. That fact supposes holiness here as well as hereafter. If heaven begins here, then man must be delivered from the condemnation of sin, and granted victory over all forms of evil. This is the aim of the Gospel: "it is a divinely revealed system of medical treatment for diseased spirits".

Pardon, or deliverance from condemnation, therefore, may be considered from two points of view, i.e. (1) removal of the penalty, which a righteous judge has laid on men because /

because they deserve punishment of the one hand, or, on the other; (2) the care of a father, who will never leave us till we are conformed to his likeness. Such a pardon is not merely passing over in mercy our sin, but also a love, which sees to it that sin is conquered. Perfect happiness is lacking when there is not complete renovation. Man is the cause of his own misery, which is estrangement from God. The love to man on the part of God is what the keystone is to the bridge. Remove the stone and there is not only the menace of danger but the reality. Replace the keystone and there is safety. The forgiveness of the Gospel satisfies the law with its penalties, which are not removed, but still men are brought into association with the purpose of God who has an infinite abhorrence of sin but loves the sinner.

The Bible is a handbook to holiness. It brings us into the atmosphere of holiness. The world has self at the centre, but the word of God calls men to put God first. It is through union with Him that we receive the power which works in us the fullest joy and peace. Self-will begets rebellion. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" is the promise. God has chosen us to be of His family, but we have contracted ourselves out of that household of love. We have been false to our true spiritual order. Christ alone, the fullest expression of the Father's character, can beget in us the life that never dies. Religion is not a question of how much a man should sacrifice to the will of God in order to free himself from the consequences of sin.

To some this is the value of Christianity, but this is an error. Religion is different altogether. It is the supplanting of self and the enthronement of God. The fall is man's own will instead of the will of God. Sorrow, not happiness, is the result; and sorrow with all its misery is not sufficient alone to bring us back to God. There is indeed /

indeed a use in sorrow to lead us back to God for deliverance. Religion is the omnipotence of God on the one hand, and the impotence of man on the other. Mere notions about God are not sufficient. It is a necessity, therefore, that God should abide in the heart of man. God is He alone, who alarms and assails the self-will of the natural man. The God of the heart differs from the God of mere doctrinal beliefs. This is the meaning of the words, "As life means Christ to me, so death means gain". Both are the will of God. The relation between the Creator and creature is a mystery. There is nothing like this union in the universe. It is not the relation of the Potter and the vessel, which he makes on the wheel. The potter creates nothing; he only changes the form of existing matter. Man, however, is so created that his highest, and noblest life is only maintained through perpetual union with God. The will of man is the sustained creature of the Divine Will. Man is a birth of the Divine mind from all eternity. We are His workmanship - His masterpiece, but a living, energising and eternal one. Sin is in man's life, but God in the testimony of conscience is freed from any responsibility for the evil that reigns within. "His presence is my real house and my real portion and until I become sensible of it, I am without a portion in the universe". (p. 26). Dependence on God is religion; independence of God is atheism. This dependence on God is a necessity, but it can be a dependence of love and it is thus that man is grafted in the true vine.

This opening chapter of the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel reveals Erskine at his best. It is one of the easiest of his books to read and understand. He says that he was more conscious of the presence of the Divine Spirit when he wrote The Brazen Serpent than in the production of any other of his books. The popular vote, however, would be cast /

cast for The Unconditional Forgiveness. How forceful the illustrations! How penetrating the insight! What ability to deal with the sublimest truths! How persuasive is the evangelic spirit! How capable his psychological analysis! The heart of man to him seemed to be an open book. No wonder his friend Principal Scott could say, when he thought of God immediately the personality of Erskine came into his mind.

At the present time the tendency of the scientific mind is to emphasise the insignificance of man. Man, it is said, is only an infinitesimal part in the cosmos. The belief that all things centred round man for his good - his discipline and education - is only a vain imagination. No one more than Erskine realised the littleness of man in comparison with the Infinite Being, but, on p. 23 Erskine, however, shows that he sees something the spirit of our age fails to emphasise, viz., that though between God and man there is an infinite difference, yet, of all created things man is the one personality in the universe, known to us, who claims to speak with the Divine Being, and to walk with God.

"When Thou saidst seek ye my face my heart responded, thy face, Lord, will I seek". Here again, as in The Internal Evidence, Erskine anticipates the inference of an age with which he had little sympathy. Understanding his own times he meets the spirit of despair even in the present age with the unique fact of man's contact with God in prayer, which Erskine does not confine to isolated moments in the believer's life but is realised in a constant consciousness of man's dependence on God.

The life of man, says Erskine, should be regulated by two laws - Love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself. In this obedience man proves he is one of the family of God; a family that exists through dependence on the great Book. /

Book. Love to God, which is obedience, keeps all other principles, and faculties, and relations of the soul in their proper place. When self takes the place of the Creator, man falls from his noblest state; and this fall implies misery through sin. Restoration from sin and misery can only be reached in the recognition of man's true relation to God. And this restoration must be full and complete, for that alone is satisfactory to the soul, awakened to its need and plight through enmity towards the God of love. It is the love of God, not the desire for happiness, which is the true keystone of the bridge. For the fulfilment of this restoration Christ the revealer of the Father came to earth because of his love, which prompted Him to become the true Root of our life. As Christ did always the things well pleasing to God, so we, in the strength of Christ, must do the same.

The compassion of God for fallen men was seen in the promise given to Adam and the fulfilment was realised in the historic fact - "To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God".

The love of God is forgiveness. To Erskine sin was a terrible reality. The reality of conscience, man's responsibility and the testimony of history witness to the fact of sin. The trail of the serpent is everywhere. It is no wonder that the love of God should be forgiveness. God would not be God were this otherwise. Adam was expelled from Eden because of disobedience and, if this spirit was maintained, either by ignorance or wilfulness, then Adam could not enjoy the blessings of pardon even although that pardon was a reality. If there was pardon why were the gates of Eden closed? They were deprived of their privileges that our first parents might be taught the dependence of children. In the promise of a Restorer, Adam was taught to abhor evil. That abhorrence was really a pledge of deliverance /

deliverance - not the abhorrence of Adam but of God. Man, even as God, must base personality on moral principles. "Ye shall not surely die", allured men from the right road, but the love of God, at back of which is abhorrence of evil, brings man again to his true bearings. Not the gifts of God, but God himself, Who is love, is man's true inheritance. And this love is to be taken by men as he accepts the sunshine and rain, the gentle breeze and the dew of heaven. The Gospel brings a man not only near to God but near also to man's neighbour. Man is lifted out of himself. There can be no selfish prayer. Not "my" Father but "our" Father. We must not only enjoy our love but double our joy in sharing it with others.

Then Erskine makes a digression. He affirms the first promise points forward to the restitution of all things, universal restoration, which doctrine is not often on the lips of the preacher, though it may be the sincere wish of his heart. In this statement we have direct reference to a belief, which Erskine finally regarded as an established principle. As early as 1827, following the idea of John Foster, whose works Erskine read at the most formative period of his life. The thought in later years held him and he never wearied in reiterating his belief, not only in discussions, but also in his letters of comfort, and encouragement. God cannot be defeated in anything but, if the will of man can defy Him, then the divine rule is just finite rule. Erskine believed that belief in final restoration gave dignity to life. It destroys littleness. All life in the doctrine is joined to the glory of God. It points to the final destruction of sin. That, believed Erskine, was the implication of the first promise given to Adam.

Pardon is not conditional. "The heart cannot be induced to love by anything except by the real or apparent lovableness /

lovableness of the object". p. 55. That is to say, it is not mercenary obedience on the part of man that is asked, but the spirit, which rejoices that God desires its love. Only a powerful manifestation of God could achieve this. Such a manifestation man has in the Divine Forgiveness. Dependence on God brings to man spiritual health, just as independence brings misery and death.

Again Erskine gives us a glimpse into his reading of the classics. p. 55. The difference between sin and holiness is not just the mean between these as a matter of degree. The Gospel does not allow of this. It is not only a matter of degree but of kind. That is also the lesson taught by conscience. To the planet an orbit is assigned, and any variation from the orbit brings confusion, so to man there has been given a rule, "This is the way. Walk ye in it". And as the straying planet can only right itself by returning to its true orbit, so man can only be the man God has planned, and desires him to be, when he touches no unclean thing, and rather than do this takes up his cross, and follows Christ. Here again Erskine breaks fresh ground. It is not happiness and its pursuits that forms the joy of life. It is sacrifice.

The Bible is the common heritage. And the Gospel is the central glory of the revealed word. The blessings of the Gospel are reached by faith which is appropriating. That is the way with the gift of sunlight, so, the eye of the soul appreciates, and appropriates the free gifts of God in Jesus Christ. One of these gifts is justification; justification then is not a judicial act of God. The ground of a man's hope, according to the Bible, is the mould of his character. It is the dependence of man on the absolute gratuitousness of the gift of forgiveness, which brings the first proof of a new life to the heart. Men call this anti-nomianism, /

antinomianism, but over against this accusation is the fact that self is anti-Christ. The free gift of God in Jesus Christ offends self, and pride, and so the blessing is not enjoyed. It is possible that men are forgiven and yet do not enter into the peace in believing. Man must receive what is offered. The door of the heart must be opened from within. Justification, then, is a state of mind arising out of faith. The law regards the life of man to be growing out of, or from a polluted root, and therefore under condemnation, whereas, when a man is in Christ he is the participator of a new life which cannot fall under condemnation.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament could never bring peace to the conscience but in the propitiatory work of Christ the conscience is cleansed and man has peace with God. Erskine shows how consolation can be brought to the troubled conscience; but, how can erring conscience be convinced that there is the need of forgiveness? That is the problem of all those who desire to proclaim the good news. It would appear also, that the full blessing of the Gospel is only reached by those who believe. Now is it not natural that the mind should be assured that faith is of the right kind? or that belief has the true hall-mark? Did Erskine lay as much stress on a personal trust in a personal Saviour as was done by the early reformers as is evident from their doctrines?

The true basis of forgiveness to Erskine rested not on what we are, but what God is. "If thou knewest the gift of God", said Jesus to the woman by the well; and God, Himself, is the well to which He invites men to come and from which to draw. The bread in the Father's home awaits the fulfilment of the resolution, "I will arise and go to my Father " . Prayer is the pledge of forgiveness. The fact, that prayer is a call to men to enter the divine Presence, is also a surety the prayer will be answered. The heart praying in the /



the name of Christ is answered, or, as afterwards put by Erskine, praying "in filial trust" is the surety of an answer. Christ our Root into which we are grafted from the beginning, gives the assurance of an answer. Forgiving love is the Manna or Bread which cometh down from heaven. It is the privilege of man to gather it, but, in the gathering, or, to the gathering no merit is added to the full and free forgiveness of God in Christ Jesus.

God, from the beginning, had a purpose of love to sinful humanity. That purpose of love lies behind the fact that God hates sin but loves the sinner. Human experience in family life testifies to this principle. We see it in the heart of a parent to the sin of a child. This is what Erskine means to draw from the words "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto them their transgressions".

In modern days we have passed from forgiveness as grace limited or unlimited. These theories of the past were scholastic, and assertive, marked by despair, and not removed from cruelty. We owe it to such pioneers as Erskine that these controversies are a matter of ancient history, and that the New Testament doctrine prevails.

So long as man cherishes sin, then, though God is offering pardon to all mankind, the individual is outwith the benefits and blessings. Sin hides the pardoning love of God. And conscience with its rebukes and protests must be circumvented by subterfuges. As soon, however, as a man turns to God and admits, or accepts pardon, he then is first pardoned. It is only in the same way that the blessing of forgiving friendship is enjoyed. And so it may happen with a friend, as with God, forgiveness is offered and granted but not accepted, and, therefore, not enjoyed.

Erskine turns from this phase of the subject to such texts as "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved", /

saved", and "He that believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life", and regards salvation and eternal life as different from pardon. One asks how? And Erskine's answer is, just as medicine is different from the health which it produces by its application. Salvation is the healing of spiritual disease and eternal life is the communication of the life of God to the soul. Pardon is obtained, when men leave false notions and turn to Christ; thereafter the soul having made a start enters upon and increases in moral and spiritual strength through continual appropriation of all that is gracious and good in God. In other words, the Gospel is not, "He that believeth shall be saved", but, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness". It seems to us now that these distinctions of Erskine in regard to pardon, and forgiveness, salvation and eternal life, are conflicting and unnecessary. The terms differ in degree, but not in kind. The blessings of the Gospel are enjoyed by a continuous appropriation of the love of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ. Of course, what we think unnecessary now was very vital in Erskine's day. Erskine was faced with Moderatism, and Calvinism in its crudest forms and with a new Evangelism, which held out free forgiveness with one hand and took the gift back with the other. It was in order to remove all hindrances to the freeness of the Gospel that Erskine set himself with so much enthusiasm, devotion and patience to explain, often with redundancy, the elementary terms of pardon, salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life. Have we not much to learn from Erskine in regard to what we really, and accurately mean by Justification by Faith? That faith is not "fides charitate formata", for as McLeod Campbell says, "this is a demand that seals up the fountain of love before it is opened".

Faith /

Faith is neither a substitute for good works, nor "a terse expression" for good works. God demands a spiritual tendency of the heart, and character towards Himself. There must be sympathy with the mind of God.

Christianity, says Erskine, has two fields - one, the infinite, and unchangeable character of God, the other the heart of man: the one full of original, uncreated light, and, that of man, in itself darkness, but with a capacity to receive light. It is possible for a man to know God is light, and for that man to be unvisited by a single ray. Darkness means separation from God. There is no light for man save in God. It is as a man's character responds to the revealed perfection of God, that the spiritual life passes on from less to more. It is thus that each of us helps to destroy the works of the evil one. It is when a man understands that God, who created all things, sustains the universe, and has thoughts of love for every creature, and to himself, that man enters into the fulness of the Divine Love, which is, in deed and in truth, the Pearl of great Price: and there is no room in the heart for anything contrary to God, hence everything else must go. God reigning in the heart is eternal life. Self is mortified, but not before we can obtain the Pearl. It is only the power of God in the heart that can accomplish this. No heart is free from risk and danger, if God is not ruling in, and over, the whole being. The enemy of God, and the thwarter of the Divine plans is evil, and evil is selfishness or self-will. Man is called to be a co-worker with God. This can only be possible to the man in whose heart God reigns. And God can only reign in the heart of faith, which is looking, receiving the truth of God. This is salvation, or in other words, salvation and sanctification are one. There is nothing arbitrary in Christianity, which is the truth revealed about God in Jesus Christ, and which justify and /

and sanctify. It is as we pant for God, the living God, that we possess the quickening power, which restores humanity. Does the prayer of Jesus in the upper room lend countenance to the idea that the forgiving love of God is not universal? Erskine shows the circumstances of that prayer fully explain the limitation, since the prayer was for those in sympathy with the intercessor - a prayer for all believers still - and the unbeliever should be warned to find in it something, which will induce him to flee from the wrath to come. Knowledge of the Bible is not the measure of our love to God. Nor is religion one of the duties of life, but, life itself that must flow through every part of our being, as the sap passes through every part of the tree. The judgments we pass on God will perish but the judgments and truths of God abide. Life and death are set before men. God's love comes to us as the sunlight - free and unconditioned, but, we, in order to receive it, must sacrifice pride and self-will. There must be no false pride. There must be the open eye to see the universal light, and, to rejoice in that light. Man is to be a receiver. All the gifts of God are perfect and good, though at first sight they are anything but good, or perfect. We must rest contented in the assurance "All things work together for good". In the darkest experience of life, therefore, we must hear the divine words, "Seek ye my face", and, in faith, our answer must be, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek". Man walks on either of two roads. The one broad and the other narrow. The one way in which we please self and in the other, where we please God. Practical religion is seeing God in everything.

When the hard and difficult have to be faced it is not helpful to ask why am I so afflicted? Why should I pass through such deep waters? Why do others escape? These are passing things. Holiness working out in us is eternal.

Life /

Life is the purpose of the Gospel, whereas pardon is only means towards an end. God's mind was not changed when sin entered, but man's relations to God were changed, when sin entered. The work of the Saviour was to emphasise the fact and to lead men to see how these relations could be sweetened. And it is as Christ dwells in us that God sees truth in human nature. The blood of Christ becomes our blood; His sap is ours, also. It is man's belief in forgiveness that opens up to him the life, and truth of God in his heart. Condemnation is taken away. The forgiving love of God ever rests on the forgiven man. This forgiving love also rests on every man as long as this dispensation lasts, and will be the ground of Judgment in the world to come. If the mercy of God is not a universal blessing, then the Scriptural assertion or ground of judgment is also denied.

This work of Erskine is a book with lessons for every age. It is not only an exposition of the "Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel", but, it is also the revelation of a human heart, who dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and, who having explored the working of God in his own heart, returns to give his experience to others. The effort was not in vain. The writer deals with the moral, and spiritual with an assurance and power, which is only in the keeping of one, specially elected and chosen.

AN APPRECIATION of "THE BRAZEN SERPENT or  
LIFE COMING THROUGH DEATH".

ERSKINE, EDINBURGH. WAUGH & INNES, 1831.

In regard to the worth and merit of "The Brazen Serpent", there have been varying opinions. One writer in the Theological Review, Edinburgh, MacNiven & Wallace, Vol. 11, page 114, asserts "The Brazen Serpent" is one of the worst written of Erskine's books". On the other hand, it was, among the books of Erskine, the favourite with Maurice, who, because of it, and other considerations, was led to dedicate to Erskine "The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament". "It was to this book (The Brazen Serpent) more than to 'The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel', that Mr. Maurice was in the habit of expressing his indebtedness. (Letters of Thomas Erskine, Hanna, Vol. 1, page 183)". Erskine himself asserts that he was never more conscious of the presence of the Divine in his soul than when he was writing this work. Perhaps Erskine's pleadings with the reader are overdone, but, even so, Erskine is true to the purpose of all his writings, to win men for the Kingdom of God. And, as one reads through the book, the attention, if the mind should weary, is arrested by some marvellous bit of writing, almost uncanny in its insight, and supported by Biblical texts, which reveal the unique acquaintance of Erskine with the word of God. There must indeed be some value in a book which called forth the admiration of Maurice and Vinet. (The Letters, page 385).

In Chapter 1 there is consideration given to the question, What is the purpose of religion? ... and Erskine answers, "Religion aims at the life of God in the heart of man; and this life is none other than the Holy Spirit abiding in man". To Erskine the values of Scriptures vary. Such a statement was new to readers, in an age when citations from the Old Testament Scriptures were of equal value to the fundamental assertions of the New Testament, for, as yet, the idea of development in revelation had not been grasped. Perhaps Erskine wrote better than he knew, for he was sowing seed /

seed to fructify after many days, and adumbrating views of Scripture, which are familiar to all who now read the Scriptures with intelligence.

Erskine fixes on the midnight interview that Nicodemus had with Jesus. This ruler of the Jews had been impelled to come to Jesus, because the demand of the Kingdom of God were so exacting, that, with all his efforts to reach the standard set by Christ, Nicodemus had failed. And the answer of Jesus to that failure was, "Except a man be born from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God". In other words, Nicodemus was confirmed in his belief that before the new laws of this Teacher he was helpless. The utter helplessness was further seen in the developed explanation of the difficulties. Nicodemus, confirmed in his experience of the hardness to obey Jesus, was shown also his ignorance of the kingdom both in its duties and blessedness.

Erskine was not oblivious to the truths implied in Calvinism. This is apparent from the words, "You must have a spiritual life in you, before you can do a single action which is not rebellious against the Kingdom of God". In answer to the question - How can these things be? - the fullest explanation was given. Emphasis is laid on the ignorance of Nicodemus in regard to earthly things, i.e., the knowledge that the human heart cannot serve in the Kingdom without life from above, and then there is revealed to Nicodemus the source of this vital life - even the life of God in the human heart. The Brazen Serpent raised by Moses in the wilderness, at the command of God, is used as the symbol to emphasise the way of life. The Israelite bitten by the serpents had but to look to discover that in that look there came to him a power, which renovated the life of him who looked. Life was restored to the body, but the life of which Jesus spake was life to the soul, yet in each case it was /



was "renovated" life or "acquired". The brazen serpent was the appointed channel for healing and life. If, however, the Israelites had begun, after the raising of the Brazen Serpent, either to pray, or to ask Moses to pray for healing, would they not be guilty of despising the gift of God's forgiveness? God had loved and forgiven the people, whether they entered into the fulness of the gift or not.

Here Erskine is reiterating one of his principles. God's command to Moses to lift up the serpent was a declaration on the part of God, that He had forgiven the people, and that He loved them, and desired they should be healed. He commanded it to be raised up, not that He might love the people who should look at it, and so be healed, but because He loved the people, and desired for them that they should be healed. Erskine from this principle goes on to say there is error made, when pardon is identified with life. And to illustrate his point he takes the poison cup given to criminals in ancient Greece, but adds the supposition, that the ruling government then offers to the criminal the antidote. Suppose, however, the antidote is not taken, then this refusal has prevented the forgiveness becoming life in him, but it could not make him unforgiven. So in the Brazen Serpent God's antidote was given. Forgiveness was there, and its acceptance was renovated, restored life. The life of the body depended on the look, and the healing of their murmurings, through believing the love of God to them. That is to say the two meanings of the Brazen Serpent were set forth:- (1) Bodily healing, and (2) Soul healing. The murmurings of the people arose because they thought God had brought them forth from Egypt only to lead them to destruction, but once they saw the second meaning of the raised serpent, then, though the hardships still continued, there was no murmuring, for the hard and painful were now considered in the light of divine love, /

love, and these sufferings became channels of grace and favour. It was to make a demonstration of this love that the serpent was raised, and the love was ample provision for the wilderness journey. The same spirit breathes all through the psalms says Erskine. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath". And Erskine's interpretation is this. "Who understandeth the nature or the purpose of thine anger? He only, who has thy fear, he only understandeth the nature or purpose of thine anger". "Now, who is it that has the fear of God? He only who sees the forgiving love of God".

The rod of Moses, so often blessed in its results, was not used as the symbol. It was the serpent - the enemy of the people. This foreshadowed the manner of God's love to men, which uses penal affliction to demonstrate his love, which, in the infliction of punishment, emphasises the evil of sin, and the necessity for its destruction. And it is only when men understand this that they cease from hiding their sin, "and forget to regard themselves as more sinned against than sinning".

The mere look at the serpent was enough to restore the ailing Israelites. It was not a matter of looking, and knowing, and believing, since the first was sufficient and only necessary. The soul was healed of murmurings when it realised there was forgiving love in God, which was consistent with anger against evil, and the infliction of punishment because of sin, but this infliction was made use of to fulfil the gracious purpose of God in putting away sin, and leaving men to share in the holiness of God. The soul was healed in the perception of the true character of God. This is the life; and "it is oneness with the mind of God".

We are in the above paragraph face to face with two of Erskine's main lines of thought. The first of these is that the Gospel healing is a material type of the salvation of the Gospel, /

Gospel, and points to a material looking for cure. It is different with soul healing. The type is wanting, and only dim shadowings of the good news of the Gospel are apparent. To understand the inwardness of the good news it is necessary to have a knowledge of the mind, and character of God. In other words, all that was needed to rescue the Israelite from the bites of the serpent was a look, but, in the healing of the stricken heart, it is not a mere bodily action. It is an inward understanding of what is behind the raised serpent, viz. the character of God, and through this inward understanding, which is faith, the soul is healed. It is possible both forms were enjoyed even by the Israelite in the camp, just as it was certain all those delivered did not enter into the fulness of the new life. In all this the glory of the Cross was only dimly represented.

Where does sovereignty come in? Erskine affirms in the symbol of the serpent presented to the eye. In the thing given, however, to the soul there is no sovereignty in the sense then understood by theologians.

Soul healing, "by the eternal constitution of things", comes from a manifestation of the character of God appealing to the understanding, and feelings, the only form in which the soul can function. "But how is this known? The bitten Israelite understood he was healed through new physical energy, because of the bodily look, so the heart is apprised of healing by the new life of the soul", which knowledge we call spiritual experience of Christian consciousness. In the case of bodily healing supernatural powers were brought into action. There was a departure from the laws of nature. In soul healing, on the other hand, we are dealing with the laws of a higher nature in regard to whose operations and laws we are not warranted to speak or call them supernatural because of lack of knowledge concerning these things.

Now, /



Now, though Erskine makes this distinction, he does not keep to this clear-cut division, for he goes on to say, "Souls are healed by the entrance into them of a supernatural but intelligible truth" concerning the character of God. The intelligible truth in the supernatural, in the things of the soul differentiates that aspect of the supernatural from the supernatural in the breach of natural laws. But is there that distinction?

The soul is healed in its apprehension of the character of God - His love for sinful men - in His healing the souls of men by causing them to experience the bitterness of sin, and, though He forgives all men, will not give them peace till they hate sin, and by faith bring themselves into line with the divine will, even as Christ, who said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work". Acquaintance with these facts in actual living experience is salvation by faith.

The Israelite was healed by an act of Sovereignty. On the other hand the discovery by the mind of a truth, which heals, and saves, that is salvation by faith, just as the discovery of a truth sets a man to do something is salvation by works. At page 28 of The Brazen Serpent Erskine gives an example of what he would term loose thought, and careless expression of thought. "You must not only know that the Son of Man was lifted up on the Cross, but you must also look at Him; in the same way as an Israelite had not merely to know that the serpent was lifted up, but also to look on it". This is an example of mixing up bodily with soul healing. The result is fallacy, for, says Erskine, knowing a thing is truth, is believing in it - and this is the only way in which the soul can look at anything. And looking in this case is just the material type of knowing and believing a thing in direct relation to my own experience. So is it with seeing. Light is known to the individual as light comes to the eye of that /

that person. Light is all around, and the individual gets his share. At the back of all these material types there is the truth that the thing to be believed can only be known by personal experience, and in the cross this is the forgiving love of God in Jesus to the world. What is the purpose of these types as setting forth the inner truth of the cross? The purpose is to purify the conscience - to purge the conscience of the individual. Forgiveness through the cross is my forgiveness. We are held in the hand of God, conceived by some as a stern Judge, but apprehension, and appropriation of the truth of the cross enables us to see on the Divine hand the mark of the nails. Fleeing into the city of refuge and going into the ark are but types of believing in Christ - knowing Him. So with the Parable of the Prodigal. It is said we must not only believe but arise, and go to the Father. We may be in the far country of unbelief, but we are still in the Father's hand, yes, and to believe is to find ourselves in the house of the Father. Principal Shairp has said that out of one of the songs of Burns a thousand romances can be written; a like thought comes to the mind in the study of such a work as *The Brazen Serpent*. It is full of suggestion. It is a mine of spiritual truth, and apart from the main issues involved in Erskine's writings, there is certainly a storehouse for any student of the Word. And, should the critic decry the findings of Erskine, he, at least, will be amazed at Erskine's ability to live, and move, and have his spiritual being in the "ipsissima verba" of Scripture. He had no equal in his day, and perhaps, no equal at the present time, among those who fashion and mould religious thought. And yet, it was possible for a student of theology to pass through a period of four years study, 1886-1890, and never hear, or be directed to the name, and works, and especially the Letters of such a giant in Biblical knowledge as Thomas Erskine. Such is the power or fear of orthodoxy!

The message of the Gospel is a message of love, which is just another name for life. And life was set forth in two ways by the Brazen Serpent:- (1) Life to the body, and (2) life to the soul. General forgiveness, in the uplifted serpent, laid the responsibility on the individual's acceptance, and the other fact, or lesson of the uplifted serpent was that the punishment of sin was not lack of love on the part of God, who through man's suffering gave life. And without these two aspects no theory of atonement is complete and by that Erskine means it to be set forth in the Bible, and as he understood the teaching of the Bible.

All the types of the Old Testament set forth in the dawn of revelation held in embryo the message of the Gospel, so abundantly made known in the message, and life of the living Christ. These whisperings of the Gospel in the dim shadows of the past find perfect articulation and voice in the words - "It is finished". In the Son of Man lifted up, we know of a past forgiveness to all men, and a love achieving life through affliction, and death to all offenders, who believe in that love. Previous to the appearance of Jesus, knowledge of God was through the written, or the spoken word, but, in Christ the word takes the form of action, and actions determine the principles of the mind, or the inwardness of the heart. In the word made flesh, we see the measure of the mind of God towards men, for all that Christ was, and achieved, was in virtue of the fact that He was the Head and representative of human nature in men. All that Christ revealed in His position of representative is an unfolding of the mind of God to all men. Christ was made perfect through suffering in order to be a true High Priest. Was this needful? Yes! because the nature of man was a fallen nature, which was under condemnation. Christ bore the condemnation, and so vindicated the righteousness of God. The spectacle of the cross is an exhibition /

exhibition of the righteous love of God. It is deliverance for fallen human nature by the path of suffering. What was the purpose of the sufferings of Christ? The orthodox reply is, Christ suffered to satisfy justice, which held that a substitute was necessary to magnify both the love, and justice of God.

In regard to this aspect of the atonement, defective though it seemed to Erskine, he believed that the Spirit of God had made it effective in the experience of many. And yet, he says, this aspect known as the doctrine of Christ's substitution contained "much dangerous error". Why? First: Would it be justice for an earthly judge to accept from an innocent person's sufferings the portion, which ought to be the lot of the guilty? No. But what does Erskine put forth as superior to this orthodox principle of substitution? The Headship of Christ. There was no fiction in the sacrifice of Christ.~ He, as the Head of man, died for every man - for the whole mass of the human nature, which is one thing - one body - in every part of which the Head is truly present. The blood of the sacrifice could not make effective atonement, for these were substitutes. Christ offered the blood of the offender. In his choice, and humanity, Jesus fell into the category set forth in the words, "God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell on the face of the earth". As in Adam all shared because he was the head, so, in Christ, the second Adam, all are partakers of Christ's finished work. The second objection to the orthodox idea is, that it dispenses with suffering in sinful man. The truth is otherwise. Man dies, and suffers for his sins. Christ did not die to free us from the law, but to write the law upon our hearts. The true punishment of sin is lost sight of in the orthodox belief. It neglects the refiner's fire. Paul speaks of filling up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake  
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the Church. And Erskine quaintly says a sick man might as well have a friend to take his medicine for him, as a sinner have a Saviour to take his sufferings for him. But what is suffering, then, according to Erskine's idea of the suffering of the cross? The answer is Christ has become a Head of new and uncondemned life to every man, in the light of which we may see God's love in law, and in the punishment, and may thus suffer to the glory of God, and draw out from the suffering that blessing, which is contained in it. God in Christ Jesus hath given man eternal life. And without that life we cannot condemn the sin of the natural life with the condemnation of which the cross is a witness. Christ had the uncondemned life, when He suffered, and being the Head of humanity, or human nature, which takes part with the condemnation of evil even as God did. Erskine is illuminating when he considers the purpose of suffering. Punishment makes clear the love of God in the law. And, added to the punishment, man suffers, there is his painful hatred of all that is evil. Christ, as our Head, bore all suffering and part of that endurance was his uncondemned life moved in a world where all were condemned, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. So, when we share the uncondemned life of Christ, which was yet condemned, we are in sympathy with God in the divine hatred of evil. This principle Erskine supports by the citation of texts, which not only prove the truth for which he is contending, but also bear witness to the fact that Erskine, as has been stated before, had an unrivalled knowledge of the Bible. His freedom, and ability to move among the types, and symbols of the Old Testament economy rival even the rabbinical knowledge of Paul, or the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Take the illustration, which leads up to the resurrection of Jesus in Chapter 2. Any one, in the old economy, who had touched a dead /



dead body could not pass through the temple; and the purification necessary before the restraint was removed. There must be purifying water strained from the ashes of an heifer, which had been consumed in fire. On the third day of exclusion the offender, or unfortunate, was sprinkled but continued unclean till the seventh, when he was again sprinkled and then he was admitted to the tabernacle. The flesh, says Erskine, is the dead body. The natural life is excluded from the blessedness of God, and the only hope is in a life, which is to arise out of death. And the conclusion is, he who sees this in the resurrection of Christ is begotten into a living hope by it. That hope becomes an anchor to the soul, and the impulse to purity akin to that of Christ. The third day of the type finds its counterpart in the knowledge of Christ's resurrection, and in the purifying hope which arises out of it. And he who is not purified the third day is not clean on the seventh - the true Sabbath - the millennial rest - and therefore knows not the resurrection of Jesus as his Head, and, therefore, is without hope of personal resurrection, which is the purifying hope. And so Erskine, by the way, believed in the millennium as an actual earthly experience, in deed from the signs of the times in which he lived, he thought that divine event or dispensation was not afar off.

To those who would object to the assertion that the furnace is necessary to purge away sin, Erskine says, that he does not imply that the sacrifice on the cross was not a complete atonement. It is. What he has in his mind is not atonement, but the purifying of the nature, which is produced by sorrow received in a godly sort. Indeed in regard to this need of suffering - "I do not mean to say that any amount of suffering is necessary to salvation. The punishment is always in our flesh, and the entrance of Christ at once /

once discovers to us the presence of the punishment, and teaches us to accept it. Punishment lovingly received is the process by which we are sanctified. The work of Christ is the source of life, and it is a work no creature could have achieved. Hence those who strive to win the forgiveness of God, and the Spirit of God, as gifts not already bestowed in Christ, are sinning against the work and atonement of Christ. Christ, our Head, made atonement for humanity. He alone exclusively was able to accomplish this, and to try of self to make atonement is the arrogance of sinful man taking to himself the position of God. Man was created in love, and, when in disobedience the bond of love was broken, the promise was made of a deliverer, who would be in Himself the living law of love to reunite the estranged. Christ was one with God; on the other hand He was one with man - fallen and rejected. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him". So far Erskine is quite in line with the common conceptions of his day till he passes on to say, God has no pleasure in the mere sufferings of any creature, even in merited suffering. It is not in suffering God takes pleasure. Nor does He demand, or did demand a character of infinity to the sufferings of Jesus, so as to make these sufferings possess the weight of the woes, and sins, failures and iniquities of the race. It was not a demand so much suffering for so much sin. Wherein did the value of Christ's sufferings consist? Christ came in order to destroy the calumny of the evil one, who had said God did not love men. This lie could only be answered by love, and omnipotence exercised by God in another way, to refute the words, "Ye shall not certainly die", would not have been love. Yet God yearned over his creatures with infinite love and mercy. The worst and most degraded were not out-with His solicitude. God might have sent a messenger to convey His will, but the love could only be conveyed in the way /

way of personal sacrifice on the part of God. And a messenger, though he died in the commission of his task of declaring the love of God for the guilty, would not be a declaration on the part of God in Jesus Christ to die for every man. Jesus was God, and brought the good news. And in the Divine Messenger the Father beheld His own perfect image.

The human heart conceived strange thoughts in regard to God. He only loves those who deserve His love. That is the conception of benevolence. God connives - elects some and rejects others, out of His mere good pleasure, and so "let us then go on to sin that grace may more abound" is the rule of those who think, because they are elect, they cannot be rejected. No! the love of God is summed up in these words, "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Love put to the test cannot answer in word only, nor can a messenger stand proxy; love is only justified in the personal act of him who loves. It was in this way that Jesus answered the lie in regard to the love of God. Not only was love justified but also the righteousness of God. It is this two-fold aspect of the Father's heart, which excluded Christ, as the Head of all of one blood, from the presence of His Father's glory, and made Him subject to death. The condemned life of the race of which Christ was the Head, formed the veil between Christ and the brightness of the Father's face. The Head came unto His own things, and His own people received Him not. They slew Him, but not His love for all men. Christ died as no stranger, but as a brother, and, by His sorrow, even unto death He pleased the Father, and glorified Him. The representatives of the then best slew Christ, who also was a Representative or Head. They showed to what depths sin could bring men, as Christ, at the same time, made known to what heights man could aspire and reach. We are one with those who slew the Lord of Glory, but we are represented in our Head /

Head as certain sharers in the deliverance that He purchased and won for us - even our restored sonship. The cross has many contrasts, but one of these is significant above all others - men tried to kill God, and those who made the attempt were, by the choice of Christ, one with Him, inasmuch as He was the Head of the race, but, in this common evil, we are yet able to protest for personality, and individuality lead to responsibility. Jesus had no human personality, but only personality as the Son of God, "Who neither sought nor found for Himself a place among the sons of men". He was separated from men in sin, but was one with them through love. He felt the sins of every man. Fallen nature had never satisfied God in all its sufferings; but the Father was glorified, when One united to fallen nature in love, though without sin, felt the sins of men, as if these were His own, since He shared human nature in His choice to be Head. This is the true expiation for sin by which evil is removed and conquered. The crucified Head was the Head of the whole body. The confidence of man, in the glory of this transaction, brings the new life of faith. It is also apparent, from another point of view, that the Father made even the wrath of the flesh to work out His praise and glory.

In the third chapter of The Brazen Serpent we see the working of Erskine's mind in many forms. There is behind the chapter that intense longing to bring others to see the love of God, as that love came to himself, in such an overwhelming manner, that for an illustration in regard to its effect the only suitable comparison is the experience of Paul on the way to Damascus.

There is also in the chapter the subtilty, or perhaps nimbleness of mind, to see in Scripture things, which elude not only the ordinary reader, but the skilled critic. Who but Erskine would have drawn the inference from the release of /

of Barabbas which comes so readily to the pen of Erskine? There is also his habit of repetition. He goes back on what he has said, but says it in a different way till he is satisfied that the reader, and not he, is at fault, if the truth is not grasped. Further, in the chapter we see his failings as a commentator, for he is not averse, though unconscious of the fact, to bend the word to his preconceived idea.

Erskine was free from the charge of putting the Bible in the place of the Pope. He had no illusions in regard to the safety and stability of the Scriptures, though man should bring to these Scriptures the test of reason, judgment, common sense and conscience. And in this Erskine was doing a great thing for the future of Bible study in Scotland, where, when he first began to write, there was certainly the suspicion that the Pope had been put down from his place of infallibility, only to be replaced by an inerrant Bible. That attitude, to-day, is rightly judged as a position, either betokening ignorance, sloth, or perhaps, what is worse, a reservation of the truth.

The genius of Erskine cannot be hid, for no one will deny that from his writings there breaks forth time and again a thought, which the ordinary mind recognises as a universal truth, and, if the genius of the poet is to express what all think, but cannot put into words, then Erskine is a genius in prose.

Pursuing his argument, Erskine takes the resurrection of Jesus as the proof of divine forgiveness for all men. Had the first Adam risen after death, then those coming after him would have believed his sin had been covered and pardoned, just as the resurrection of Christ implies pardon to all believers. The second Adam in his rising brought in a dispensation of Forgiveness to all flesh. Men, dead in trespasses and sins, could have life in God's forgiving love alone. "Now is the /

the accepted time, now is the day of salvation". After the resurrection of the second Adam all mankind dwelt in an atmosphere of love, of which the sunlight is the type, but, as men sometimes fail to realise, though they have cellars to their house, they need not live in them, so men may reject the love of God. Now this free love of God is not of man's deserts, but simply because Christ's sufferings, even unto death, gained the pardon for all. The second Adam made a protest against sin, not sin in the abstract or general, but His own, as the sinless Head of Humanity. And it is because we are members of this Head that we have redemptive love, whereas the first Adam, before he fell, had only creative love.

The sum of the matter is expressed, says Erskine, in the oneness of Christ with our race, in order that we may be one with Him in spirit. As He is our Head, according to the flesh, what He won for us is placed within our grasp, as an inalienable right, but which we must take for ourselves in order to experience the reality, since, without this experience we are separated from the Kingdom, either because we choose otherwise, or are indifferent to the call of the Spirit.

Erskine anticipated the new spirit of inquiry, which was beginning to shake the foundations of effete science, and the shaking, too, which certainly would come to the complacent teachers of religion based on mere authority. That is the inference one may draw from his first book, *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, but to judge from *The Brazen Serpent* he was not conscious that he was building so well, or anticipating the outlook of the present age on religious problems. Though he was the first to speak of the Natural Law in the Spiritual World, Erskine had not fully grasped the modern idea of development in Religion, though he comes very near to it again and again in *The Brazen Serpent*. The hint of it is surely in the distinction he makes between the promise of a deliverer - the /

the spoken word - the foundation of Old Testament faith, and the trust or faith of the New Testament, when "The Word became flesh", just as he seems far removed from development in his words in the footnote, page 113, where we read, "and I may be allowed here to observe, that there is something very monstrous, and absurd in the supposition, that the early revelations of God did not contain the doctrine of a future state, or rather of the resurrection".

In Chapter IV of The Brazen Serpent the distinction drawn between the uplifted serpent, and the uplifted Christ is strikingly illustrated in Erskine's own way. The comparison of Christ to Samson and to David in his conflict with Goliath to illustrate that the Son of Man lifted up is a step above the serpent lifted up, and a step within the veil, because it connects the conquest with the conqueror. Even so, although the conqueror calls on us to take up our cross and follow Him in every path which He trod, yet His conflict is, in fact, a step above our conflict.

On pages 122 and 123, one finds reason for wonder at the marvellous facility and insight possessed by Erskine in his exposition of spiritual things. The critic may say The Brazen Serpent is the worst written of all Erskine's books, but it would be well to add that in the book the things of the soul are as strikingly and simply set forth as in the great passages of Bunyan's Pilgrim's progress. There is the Son in eternity, "the object of the unutterable complacency of and favour of Jehovah". "The work of Christ is the first link of the chain, which is to bind creation to the throne of God". "We begin where He left off; His victory is our provision". "We take hold of Him as He took hold of the unlimited Godhead". "He that believeth that this Christ is in him, he eateth Christ and he liveth by Him". "He liveth in the strength; yea, it is no more he that liveth, but Christ that liveth in him. This is our provision, whether /

whether we live by it or not; whether we believe in it or not. And it is simply because this provision has been actually given to us that Christ says "Follow Me". "For our provision consists of two parts a present possession and a hope of good things to come ... and in whom he have the fulness of the Spirit and the hope of good things to come, is the hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour". "Faith embraces everything, which God hath revealed ... hope is the earnest outstretching expectation ... hope is the natural feeling of a soul which has entered in to God's plans. The Gospel has always consisted of these parts - the coming kingdom and the sacrifice for sin. Holy love forgiving sin without clearing it".

The Epistle to the Romans had a striking fascination for Erskine, and, here again Erskine showed how oblivious he was to the idea of development, and also to the promise that as men through the ages were led of the Spirit, fuller truth would become manifest. There can be little doubt but that Erskine makes Paul think Erskine's thoughts, which were indeed true only through the fuller understanding of the implications of the Divine Fatherhood. When Erskine expresses his discoveries in spiritual things, by the aid of his own genius for illustration and exposition, how illuminating is his message! For illustration take the following words ... "When the poor ignorant disciples were in the ship with Him, and saw the waves rise and Him asleep - they came to Him and said 'Lord save us, we perish'. That ship could not have perished - heaven and earth might have passed like a scroll, but that ship was safe, its freight insured it; and, if the disciples had really known that this was the incarnate Jehovah in the ship with them, they would have known that their safety and God's omnipotence were one thing. Well, our flesh is the ship, our world is the ship. Christ hath come /



come into the frail bark of our flesh, and He hath become a partaker of it - He hath come into our world, and He is now clothed in its substance; this is the hope of the ends of the earth. For He is coming again into this world to manifest in power and glory that holy love He hath manifested in weakness and contempt".

"We cannot by our unbelief annihilate that bond of the flesh by which God hath bound us to Himself; but we may by our unbelief exclude ourselves from the blessing, for by unbelief we shall continue without righteousness, and without that life from above, which discovers to us, and fits us for entering into the kingdom of God. The righteousness, which is by faith, is no imputed thing, in the ordinary sense given to 'imputation' in man's theology."

"In that sense - namely, in the sense of being an outside thing, a non-imputation of sin - it belongs to every human being during the accepted time, but, in its true sense, it is an inside thing, being in fact the same thing as the life ... It is a partaking in the character of God, which can only have place in those who know the name of character. We have righteousness in us, when we see God's righteousness, as we have light in us, when we see the light of the sun". In the Preface to The Works of Dr. Chalmers, Vol. 8, (Glasgow, Collins) there is an illustration of the common use of imputation, which Erskine combats ... "Christianity not only imputes a judicial, but it imparts a personal righteousness, to all who accept its overtures". Over against this popular idea, Erskine has these words to explain the free gift of life ... "But as it is a life coming to us through death, and from a source lying on the other side of death, it is always a strange and unwelcome inmate in the flesh, and, in the world lying on this side of death. They hate it, and no wonder, for it is a mortal enemy to them in their present state. It refuses all sympathy with them, it condemns everything /

everything in which they delight, it witnesses against them continually as the murderers of Jesus, and its continual working to crucify them". It is in such sayings, or words, that we see not only the revolt of Erskine against some of the tenets of Calvinism, but also his appreciation of the great things in Calvinism. Total depravity to him was just the inability of man to do what is good, without the aid of the indwelling Spirit. Imputation to Erskine was lost in a more glorious fact ... "Jesus obtained this life for us through the death of His flesh. And He did this not as our substitute, but as our Leader ... He did not enter into death's prison to dispense with our entering into it; but He entered into it as our Head, that He might break open a way into the region of life on the other side of it, through which He might draw His body after Him. The grave was a fast prison, until He entered it, but when He entered it, He broke its bars, He spoiled the spoiler ... Jesus was made perfect as the Head of this life, only through suffering unto death, and men are only made perfect as His members through the same process. It was not till the last moment that He could say, "It is finished", and until the last moment Paul continued to say, "Neither am I already perfect". How near and yet far Erskine is from Calvinism, when he asserts, "It is not an effort, nor by working ourselves up, that we should either come to love or hate, or suffer with Christ; we must have the very Spirit of Christ in us, the very love wherewith God loveth, nothing less will do. This love in us, which is life, yea, God Himself, for God is love, will love, and hate and suffer in us just as Christ did, because it was the same love dwelling in Him, which loved, and suffered, and hated in Him".

When we come to analyse the contents of the fifth chapter of The Brazen Serpent we get a very striking testimony to the /

the nature of the manysided character of Erskine. In a few terse paragraphs he proves his claims to be, if not a systematic theologian, at least, one who had a right which he exercised, to criticise and condemn those who belittled theology as a science, and those, on the other hand, who, though ambassadors for the kingdom, set forth the message of the King in such a way as to be less worthy than the corresponding style used by those writers and teachers in the realm of science, or history, philosophy and poetry. On such a subject Erskine was scrupulous. For instance, his care in this respect as an heritor, in whom was lodged the power to appoint, or nominate a minister to a parish church, can be judged from his actions in regard to his own parish. The letter which he wrote to his fellow-heritors is a model one, not only for the system that has passed, but one for all to whom has been given the power to choose a minister in these democratic days. In the chapter there is also Erskine in the spirit or role of the mystic, as mystic he was. In Christian Mysticism - (Inge, Methuen, 6th. Edition, page 5), there is the following description ... "Religious Mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or more generally, as the attempt to realise in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and the eternal in the temporal". On page 167 of The Brazen Serpent there occurs a paragraph which at once brings the reader into the fellowship of one who answers perfectly to this description ... "Before Christ appeared in the flesh, the word of promise concerning Him, when received into any heart, became a sacred lodgment, a little fortress, in which the spirit of God dwelt, and warred, and testified against the world lying in the wicked one. Thus it did in Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Lot, and all the patriarchal pilgrims, and all the prophets. As soon /

soon as the word of God's promise entered into them they were engaged, whether they would or not, in a spiritual warfare against the devil and the world - they were compelled to bear their part in God's controversy - they became men of strife, and contention to the whole earth - they brought a claim from God against men, and therefore every man cursed them - they were cast out of the vineyard and slain - they were destitute, afflicted and tormented. But yet they were the men who stood before God in the gap, and turned away His wrathful displeasure, that He consumed not the world. They were the men who sighed and cried for the abominations done in the land, and God's mark was upon them". On page 171 of The Brazen Serpent we read ... "The desire of the Spirit is to penetrate and quicken the whole mass of the human nature, even as the sap of a tree seeks to penetrate and quicken the whole mass of the tree. But within the limits of this general desire, the Spirit has a special charge, marked out for Him, by the sovereign election of God, and that is the cleansing and sanctifying from out of the human nature, a temple for the Lord, a body for Christ". On page 173, "Man is the subject contested for - by the spirit of Christ to deliver and bless him - by the spirit of Satan to bind him fast in ruin. Prayer is the expression of the Spirit of Christ in this conflict ... It is the bursting forth of the holy grieved spirit of God - the welling up of the Spirit into the bosom of God. It is the holy love of God appealing to, and taking refuge in, the omnipotence of God".

Erskine was also a prophet in the truest sense - a preacher of righteousness, who had grasped the principles in the divine government, and was so sure both of the Divine Ruler, and the laws of His kingdom, that he sought to divide the good things of the kingdom to all men, and this desire was his whatever the reception meted out to him might be. But /

But if Erskine was as great in spirit as the writers of Isaiah, or the prophet Micah, the author of The Brazen Serpent could lay aside his true prophetic robes and take to himself the role of the would-be prophet, who deals in seals, and has special fancies for days and figures, but Erskine does all this with a simplicity of heart, and openness of soul, which separates him by continents from those writers who foretell without forthtelling.

One cannot read this, Erskine's third book, without responding to the dramatic mood or style wherewith he sets forth his various points; on page 168 we find these vivid words ... "The contest between the spirit of God and the spirit of the devil has become more intense. The serpent has received a deadly wound, but still he has strength, and he has come down in great wrath, knowing he hath but a short time. Now the enemy has come in like a flood, and yet where is the standard of the Spirit raised against him? God calls on those who know His name to cry for this - to cry unto Him that He would be jealous for His own name's glory, and look on the face of His anointed, and avenge us of our adversary".

We find also in The Brazen Serpent Erskine's conception of the Church and the work to which the body of Christ is called. "The desire of the Spirit", he says, "is to penetrate and quicken the whole mass of the tree. But within the limits of this general desire, the Spirit has a special charge, marked out for Him by the sovereign election of God, and that is the cleansing and sanctifying from out of human nature, a temple of the Lord, a body for Christ. And this Spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus, having been given to Him as the reward of his work, and is now laid up in Him for us, still bears our griefs and carries our sorrows - and as He thus suffered in the Head, whilst this Head was in fallen flesh, and hence was capable of suffering, so He still suffers in /

in the members of His body, whilst they continue in mortal flesh, according to the measure of His indwelling, which is according to the measure of their faith. The living members of Christ do thus, like their Head, bear the burden of the world's sins and sorrows - and they are thus fitted to be intercessors for the world, and to stand before God in the gap". The Church among her spiritual gifts possesses the gift of Prayer. "Prayer is the Spirit of God descending into the hearts of the faithful and there working the will of God and then carrying them up again to God. Prayer is not extorting blessing, but communing with one, who delights to bless. It is the will of God that all should be saved, and that it is His own loving Spirit within it, which even now inspiring these desires, and drawing forth those prayers, for things which He Himself longs for, in order thus to prepare for their accomplishment. It is indeed a mighty mystery. For it would seem that something is to be done by prayer, which cannot be done even by God (with reverence be it said) without it". "Again", Erskine says, "what is the meaning of one soul being cast on another, so that that other cannot choose but pray for it - although there may exist little or no personal acquaintance between them, and no tie but this mysterious spiritual necessity?" The reply to the whole is, It is God - and who by searching can find out God? It is only in this way the church can live. The Spirit is the life of the church and that life fits the body to possess power to be a fellow-worker with God in the conflict against the serpent. The witness of the members of the church is, Christ as head is the life. It is in the strength of the life that the members can intercede for the body and the world. The kingdom must always possess a witness. Christ the Head is a King and to Him is given a Kingdom or dominion. He is an anointed King. With such a heritage the power of the /

the church could and should be unlimited. Erskine's criticism of the church in his day is that she has failed to enter into her privileges and powers. The Head is not answered by the hand. The message of the church too often has been a Gospel of safety, instead of power to enter in and possess the land. The sap, which comes from the life of the indwelling Spirit is meant to produce various fruits, but, if only a manifestation of holy love in the members of the body of Christ without power is produced, then the glorious power of Christ is neglected. The apostles preached and worked with power. They spake the word with boldness. Miracles were done by this power. The Gospel to the apostles was love dominant.

Here Erskine brings in a direct reference to the gift of tongues, a subject, which interested him greatly. From the manifestation of power claimed by certain men and women in the West of Scotland, and examined ~~into~~ by Erskine, he made a wide deduction from which Erskine afterwards resiled. What Erskine wrote in 1831 did not constitute his beliefs in the last years of his life.

What were these beliefs of 1831? In his own words the synthesis of these beliefs is summed up in these words, "had the faith of the church continued pure and full, these gifts of the Spirit would never have disappeared". Erskine held there was no revocation of Mark 16, 17-18 - "And there is as vital a connection between believing and the possession of miraculous gifts as there is between belief and salvation." The early church possessed this power, and exercised it. And Erskine from the statement in Ephesians 1, 13-14, asserts this power is promised to the church until her risen Lord returns. All have not this power, but the possession of it is necessary for the edifying of the body of Christ. It is a necessary gift. The gifts must be used in the line of certain /

certain conditions. Men are not to be carried away with every wind of doctrine. The church of Rome, therefore, though an apostate church, is justified in her condemnation of the Protestant church for this unbelief. The gift of tongues is real, and the reality will pass when that which is perfect has come.

Erskine cites in proof of what he has been saying the difference between the miracles of the apostles before and after Pentecost, but the difference is so mystical in its conception that little weight is attached, by the ordinary reader, to the difference between the phrase - the Spirit with them - and the Spirit in them. This belief in regard to the power of the church to work miracles was one of those fervours into which the most spiritual are apt to fall.

Erskine affirms that the belief that miracles were only meant to authenticate, or to witness to inspiration, is a mistaken one, for these powers were given to witness to the exaltation and present power of the Head of the church. On page 182 Erskine defends his beliefs by an illustration which reveals the many-sided nature of the writer's mind from a psychological aspect. It may be safely said that for originality the illustration is striking, though it may be somewhat simple, yet does the illustration not betoken a mind to whom the conflict between good and evil was intensely real - the only reality for the church and humanity? The illustration is in these words ... it is "a striking fact illustrative of the deep cunning of the prince of darkness, that he has not permitted his instruments to press these texts much, nor to argue from them so triumphantly as they might have done, that the absence of miracles from the church was a refutation of the Bible. And why? The subtle enemy of man saw that there was more danger to his own kingdom to be apprehended from the use of this weapon, than advantage. It might /



might have led to a result very different from that of disproving the divine authority of the Bible. There was another conclusion to which the argument might have led, and that was the lack of faith in the church. And thus the pressing of this argument might have awakened the church to a sense of her true condition". And to the evil, on the difference between a church asleep and a church alive to her power, was the difference between defeat and victory. Erskine's argument is just as it was said, in Old Testament days, there was no open vision, because of the evils in the land, so there is the discontinuance of miracles in the church, because of the lack of faith. And, as the open vision returned with returning faith, so, when the church is alive to her riches, the church will be enriched and, through her, others.

Erskine presses home his point with another illustration - that of the seal. This seal is not regeneration, but regeneration plus the power to witness to the resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. It is, however, difficult to see the similarity between the baptism of John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, when Paul finds certain of John's disciples in Ephesus, and asks, "Unto what were ye then baptized?" The one was the twilight and the other the full day of grace. Accordingly Erskine seems to think that sins forgiven and the new life of faith differ as twilight from noonday from the power added to regeneration. Perhaps the best answer is to be found in Erskine's own prophecy ... "We are now touching on the last scene of this awful mystery, the great and terrible day of the Lord. The sealing in the Revelations, and the outpouring of the Spirit of Joel are one thing". Erskine believed his age was ripe for this, and therefore we ought to be looking for the immediate appearance of the gifts. Erskine's reading of the signs of his time lead him to say, the /

the true servants of God will be sealed, and the proof of the seal will be the power to work miracles, but over against this fact will be the power given to the followers of the beast to show a like power. When the wrath of God comes like a flood the safety of the church will be in the seal on the foreheads of all her members, who have entered into the reality of power. One wonders, if Erskine was alive to the words of Christ, they would not believe, though one rose from the dead. Proof of the coming cataclysm was to be seen in the Papal power, the defeats of the Turkish Empire and the atheism of Britain.

After this excursion into the region of prophecy, in the case of Erskine both a foretelling and a forthtelling, he returns to the gift of tongues, a gift which, unaccompanied with the ability to interpret, is ranked as the lowest spiritual gift. Erskine has reason to believe this low, permanent gift had been bestowed on certain men and women, whom he knew and had tested. But could he prove the gift in another without having it in himself? - and this he does not claim. This gift was only the forerunner of greater manifestations, and was a sign to unbelievers. Erskine asks for charity from his readers. He claims to express the meaning of Scripture, and yet, he knows this may not be the truth according to the very mind of Christ. Perhaps, if he had gone a step farther and questioned whether those who gave us the message of revelation, gave it without the accretions which inevitably form part of the divine message. The bed of a river has an influence on the colour of the water itself. That water may be clear or drummy, it may be red or slatey, just because of the stones or rock in the river's bed. Erskine deplores his want of faith which hinders him from the power of these gifts, and he deplores the lack of the same power among the shepherds or the ministers of /

of the Word, in this land. His criticism of the church is not captious, but from conviction. And Erskine had some cause to criticise the church in Scotland. But Erskine's anxiety was to see the church in the land, which he loved, filled with power and sealed before the great and notable day of the Lord.

The mystery of evil was felt by Erskine, and no one felt it more keenly, but this mystery was the secret of the Lord. Man blamed God, but it is on the shoulders of man that responsibility should be laid. Man fell before the temptation "ye shall be as gods". The only synthesis that satisfies Erskine is, good will come out of evil. The problem is more complicated now than in Erskine's day. He wrote at a time when the origin of man was taken from the records of Genesis, but out of, or into these, we must now read the records and discoveries of Science. And, yet, the defeat of the enemy of souls was foretold in Genesis for the seed of the woman was to bring victory. Everything was lost in the fall for life was lost. Two enemies must be destroyed according to Scripture, says Erskine, first the serpent, who seduced man and, second, the beast who was empowered by the evil one to draw men, or rather withdraw them, from God as the fountain of power. Fallen man occupied by the spirit of Satan is the third enemy of God and man to be vanquished by the great Deliverer. The dragon, the beast and the false prophet, whose message is self-gratification, form the anti-trinity. The dragon is opposed by God - the beast being opposed to Jesus, whose Kingship he denies, the false prophet, who reiterates the delusions both of the dragon and the beast. The beast being cast into the fire the millennial reign of Jesus will begin, and the overthrow of the dragon implies the kingdom yielded to God, and the subjecting of the Son to Him that God may be all.

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To Erskine the Bible is the book of the wars of God against the evil one and evil. Erskine emphasises the mystery of all this, and one must envy the freedom and decision with which he reads the divine purpose, even although the mind refuses to agree with his conclusions, or his reading of history. "The Bible", says Erskine, "is the history of the world in the world's conflict with evil. God hath chosen the human nature to be his battleaxe and weapons of war, for it is the seed of the woman through whom triumph is won. God would have human nature to be a conscious weapon by the word of God abiding in the soul of humanity". The word is the utterance of God and Christ is the living word. It is in and through these revealings of Himself that God shows His favour to us and makes us sons of God. And out of human nature so favoured and redeemed God would have a church so that all creation might dwell in the glorious sunshine of His Divine favour.

To Erskine the Bible is based on one supreme principle, since this principle alone is able to account for the existence of the Bible; the principle is that God loves men and is ever seeking to bring men into a relation of oneness with Himself. Leave out this fact of love and the book is a sealed book. "The promise given to Adam was the victory of the seed of the woman, and this promise is made good, for he, who shares in the love of God, has forgiveness, the which is denied by the enemy of mankind". It is a law of Christian experience that no one can live to God apart from an experimental knowledge of forgiveness. The fear of Adam in the garden arose from want of confidence in God, which confidence was restored through the sacrifices offered by them of which the skins were the evidence as the blood of the subsequent sacrifices recorded in the Scriptures. The sacrifice of Christ has finished transgression whether a man knows it or not, /

not, but it is necessary he should know it, since he is not trusting in God till he knows it". To a modern mind there seems little difference between the Hutchesonian theory of the cherubim and the flaming sword, the former being the Divine Presence and the latter the fire and knife of sacrifice; and Erskine's interpretation of the skins wherewith our first parents clothed themselves. Certainly Erskine reveals a deep knowledge of Scripture and only a very spiritual mind was capable of seeing the spiritual things he discerned. At the same time it cannot be denied that Erskine outruns revelation in his typology. The illustration of a type in Michal despising David, and taunting him with uncovering himself, and Ham's looking on his father's nakedness does not cast much light, if any, on the words in the New Testament "These men are full of new wine". We have said Erskine was a mystic in the truest sense, but he had also the failings of some of the mystics, who, in their interpretation of Scripture, descend to the puerile.

Membership of the Kingdom of God depends on man's choice, but self-will may hinder belief in the forgiving love of God. Men believe in one another but not in God. Here Erskine reveals again his appreciation of the best points in Calvinism, for he adds, "none do believe except those who are acted upon by this supernatural influence". This, however, is very different from the perversion of this principle in such an objection as "we cannot believe without the electing grace". It is quite true that men can do no good of themselves, but men fail to see that in Christ the Head there is the reason for men to make the true choice, since, according to Erskine's view, in Christ's sacrifice there is a reason to believe. One says, "I am willing to believe God if He will give me faith. Yes, but God has given eternal life by Christ and in Him the power or ability to glorify God".

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The marks of a true church are, first, to God as the body of Christ and in this relationship every individual is a participator and necessarily so. Secondly, the church must possess a universal message, or a Gospel to all mankind; without that Gospel the church is neither a light nor a condemnation to the world. If the Headship of Christ of which all are partakers, the universality of the message, and the Divine love, promise, forgiveness and power are not proclaimed, then the men outside the church cannot but be excused from rejoicing or filled with holy joy "on lower grounds than the church herself".

The doctrine of Sovereignty, says Erskine is just another term for some fact unrevealed of God. But, in Christ, God is revealed in His goodness to mankind, though in the revelation there may be mystery, why therefore not approach the mystery in what we know, rather in place of trying to explain the mystery by the unrevealed or unknown? The mistake men make is to detach sovereignty from love and holiness, as we see these revealed in Christ, whose revelation is a witness to the goodness of God. The modern expression of the same idea is - "Do not allow the unknown to disturb what you do know".

The false prophets of the old dispensations are still alive in spirit in the new. When anything of the world - ceremonies, doctrines, talents or learning - is put in place of the spirit, those who do these things are false prophets. This is man worship. To the church there is to be a period of blissful, perfect peace. Satan and the beast then will have no power over the church but only those in the world, who believe not. Why is the church to have this period of bliss? The answer is Christ and His church must reveal the glory of the second Adam, inasmuch as it is shown that immortality does not come from the abolishing of death, but from /

from the fact of union with the Head, whose body the church is. After the millennium there will still be faithless and lapsed men of the world. The church will abide strong in the life ever flowing from the Divine Head. And as Christ witnessed in the days of His flesh with a perfect witness, so the church must in the millennial days witness in a perfect way through miracles, and mighty works, to the discomfiture of the beast, and the world; and the witness of the church will be in her glorious, deathless life, even in the presence of death still dominating the rest of the world. There is to be the insurrection of the serpent after the millennium, for though the Beast is cast into the lake of fire the Serpent, the author of the first lie abides. His lie was the denial of Life, whereas the lie of the Beast was the denial of Power. In the Millennium, the Church has Power, but, once more, the first lie will be set forth again. The Cross is an answer to that lie, which is afraid of universal or general forgiveness "as if the fear of an infliction were the only barrier against sin".

The devil has the power of Death. This explains the miracles of Jesus so often performed on the sabbath, a type of the millennial sabbath awaiting the church on earth, when the inhabitants thereof shall no more say, "I am sick". Then the glory of God's love will be manifested by a joy infinitely superior to the joy of the world, ere sin entered. Out of evil has therefore come good to humanity.

We have said Erskine did not appreciate the modern idea of development in religion, but, when he deals with the love of God manifested to man before the fall, he, at least, adumbrates a conception, which, to say the least, is tentative of a wider meaning. To unfallen man God made Himself known as "bountiful Creator and Preserver", whereas afterwards - after the fall - the manner of God's love - the holiness of his love /

love - the righteousness, the entire unselfishness, was declared. There is in that statement the belief or the inference, though Erskine would not perhaps assent to it, a fall upwards, and a principle of development in religion. Would that development, however, not have taken place in another way than the need for restoration of fallen man? Amid all the strange, and mystical ideas, theories and interpretations of the Scriptures, there are guesses at truth. These are now articulate and some historically true, but not along the line of approach adopted by Erskine. This can be said, Erskine, just because he was right in the main in regard to the work and function of the church, did not fall into the errors of Irving, and, therefore, did his part in rescuing the Scottish church from the temptation to lay undue emphasis on religion in contrast to piety. All through the wanderings of the mind of Erskine concerning types and shadows, there is always present to the reader of his words the consciousness that the soul of the man is the heart of one who walks with God. The Brazen Serpent is a book of origins. It is the struggle of a mind towards truth and though his interpretations of Scripture may be regarded, in many instances, as simple and even credulous, no one would contest this more than Erskine. At least the aims are the gallant efforts of a "knight-errant" and a pioneer in days, when lethargy seemed to have taken hold of the minds of religious thinkers.



AN APPRECIATION of the DOCTRINE of ELECTION and  
the CONNECTION with the GENERAL TENOR of  
CHRISTIANITY by THOMAS ERSKINE.

2nd. EDITION. EDINBURGH. DAVID DOUGLAS, 1878.

Erskine was dissatisfied with the common notion regarding Election that some, by the sovereign power of God, and for His glory, were created for honour, and others for dishonour; and, therefore, in order to work out this plan some were visited by the Spirit, and others unvisited; moreover, this visitation was not only irresistible, but also indispensable in the work of salvation.

Erskine says he held the same doctrine for many years, modified by the "marrow belief", Christ having died for all; but, even then, he submitted to, rather than believed in, the popular idea. At first, it seemed to him that Romans, Chapter 9 clinched the argument in favour of Election as popularly believed. It cannot be said, understood. But, apart from the passages in Romans Chapter 9, there seemed to Erskine to be other passages of the Bible where other aspects of God's purpose with men were set forth. There was the open door, which, if it were not really open, gave reason to the slothful servant to say, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man". As Erskine considered the popular, or common notion of election, it seemed to him that God was not the friend of man, who was dealt with as a mere creature of necessity without any responsibility. The sovereignty of God was the all prevailing principle. To this questioning of Erskine the reply of the orthodox was, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" To Erskine, however, this question implied a misunderstanding of the import of the question itself. Searching about for a way through the maze he seemed to find in Ezekiel, Chapter 18 and Chapter 33, and in Isaiah, Chapter 5, a true explanation. The children were neither to bear the iniquities of the fathers, nor the fathers those of the children.

For the returning sinful man, there was hope since God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The judgment of /

of God rested on principle where man was concerned. "Therefore will I judge you, O, House of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God". In other words, God is a righteous God and, in man, there is a power or capacity to appreciate and apprehend these ways, and therefore man is held by God to be even the judge of the ways of the Eternal. The same thought is emphasised in Isaiah, where God condescends to plead His cause before men as He demands an answer to the question, whether the sufficiency of the divine provision to enable Israel to do right does not set forth His righteousness, and warrant the punishment He inflicts. What Erskine found in the Old Testament he also discovered in the New Testament. The popular idea of Election was not scriptural, and yet, to his mind, as he held to the end of his days, there was in Election a deposit of truth. The Christian consciousness bore witness to that divine something, as an element which glorified God. Hence he fought shy of any argument, which seemed to deny this and attribute self-quickenings to man.

At one part of a discussion Erskine says he learned a lesson from Plato, and this statement leads one to ask, if, in his study of the classics, he did not get a line of thought from the poets of Greece, in regard to the problem of Jeremiah and Isaiah. Aeschylus and Sophocles repudiated the idea that children were punished not only for their own sins but also for those, which the popular notion believed, i.e. inherited guilt. Children might suffer for the sins of the fathers, but were not punished. What Jeremiah did for Israel these two poets did for Greece. They commenced to purify the popular idea.

The 9th. Chapter of Romans, as we have seen, stood in his way, but light came to him from the Parable of the Potter, which Parable, instead of being the basis of Election, is the /

the foundation of something altogether different. The prophet, says Erskine, is not setting forth the fact that God in His sovereign power ordains one to life and another death, or withholds grace from one whilst giving all to another. No, the Divine Potter only claims, if the vessel which He has made in the form of a man, turns out badly, the right to break it, and reconstruct it, that it may fulfil the Divine purpose. That is historically true. Israel was a chosen vessel to be a witness for Jehovah, but instead Israel turned to gods many, and to bring Israel again into line the nation was sent into exile from which, when the restored returned, there was no more hankering after idols.

In the light of this Old Testament parable, Romans 9, 21, was solved, and Erskine was confirmed in his solution by Chapters 10 and 11 of the Romans. That is to say, (if we follow the exegesis of Erskine, which has been known to bend to his enthusiasm,) Paul in this (Chapter 9, 21) is not stating the principle of Election, as then popularly understood, but is really following up in the new dispensation what was true even under the Old Testament economy. There is also the story of Isaac and Ishmael, an allegory of all Israel, and adds, the apostle warns his fellow-countrymen not to rely on their descent from Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, i.e. according to the flesh, but to rely on the spirit or character. The spiritual mind have I loved but the carnal mind have I hated. Personal, or unconditional election was not in the mind of Paul. The Parable of the Potter is the key to Romans Chapter 9. There is an election. No two people are alike.

Talents differ both in kind and in number, but the judgment is not because we have been born with one talent, but what use have we made of the many or the one? The only Election is that of the Spirit. Every vessel unto his honour is thus /

thus invited, and instructed to become a vessel unto honour and that by purging himself from the flesh - the first Adam - and following the second Adam - Take up thy cross. God hath called us with an Holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace. We see the elective power of God when He determines what shall be the different privileges and opportunities of individuals, or nations but, not in determining how either a man or a nation shall use the privileges and opportunities. In the Parable of the Potter, the two vessels were made out of the one lump of clay. This points to the fact that Adam and Christ, partakers of the same flesh and blood, are the two heads, or representatives of the race. The first vessel, Adam, was marred by sin, and failure, but this marred vessel was made anew in Christ Jesus, on whom was laid the iniquities of the race of mankind, and who rose again from the dead to be the new Head and Mould of all who, in the spirit of Christ, give themselves in loving obedience to the will of God.

It is in such statements of the Gospel message that Erskine shows his appreciation of the mystic side of Calvinism, and not only the mystic side of Calvinism, but also the mysticism in Erskine's own presentation of truth.

Still pursuing his theme, Erskine points out that Israel made a mistake when it was thought God had created Israel and the Gentiles out of different materials, and, thereby determining the fact that Israel should rule and the Gentiles serve. It was easy, then, for the Jew to think himself ready for the use of God. Such an idea was pleasing to the natural man, but there was gross failure to see that the spirit of service was all important, and not mere birth.

On pages 30 and 31 there are two paragraphs, one beginning with the words ... "This is man's controversy with God" ... and ... "The Jews would have welcomed" ... which reveal /

reveal Erskine at his best as a writer and thinker. Is a Philosophy of history possible? has been discussed in recent times as an adjunct to another problem, the Christian Religion in Relation to History. Erskine, in all his expositions of the religion of Israel, shows how well he understood the standpoint of the prophets of Israel and their reading of history. There was an election of gifts, or talents to nations as well as to individuals. But there was no election in regard to the use of these gifts, for, as the prophets taught, failure to use the privileges in a spirit of righteousness brought ruin and disaster. This, to Erskine, was the Philosophy of History and the relation of Christianity to history. Miss Wedgwood, in her Journal, writes, (vol. 2. Letters of Thomas Erskine, page 168) "I said what was perplexing me in the New Testament was not a passage here and there, but the difficulty I felt in reconciling it with the whole fact of modern civilisation - that it seemed at times as if it were condemned by the Bible. "Oh no", he said, "there is no condemnation of civilisation in the Bible, only of that incivilisation which is idolatry"; he did not use that word, but I know it was something equivalent to it. Christianity is uncompromising. It says with an infinite patience, "There is only one good". People now want to hear that there are many different sorts of good.

The lesson of God does not seem to me so much to be contained in history as to be got at through history. It is not by looking at outward events we shall see any manifestation of the righteousness of God. That is a common view, I know, but I cannot entertain it. Looking at things under that aspect, God often appears to be taking the part of unrighteousness. We must look upon it merely as the school of the training of individual spirits, that to each one individually the message shall come through that which as a whole seems to have no meaning ...

I am much more sure of the being of a Righteous One than I am of the existence of those chairs. But the sense of the demand for righteousness is much nearer the core of my being than the outward world".

The popular idea of Election was not only an offence to reason, but also, as we might well expect, to a personality of the type of Erskine, the doctrine in some of its aspects was cruelty, the offspring of an age less enlightened than that of Erskine. He cites the case of the malefactors on the cross. Is it not, he asks, in effect more in harmony with all that we know of God to say the one was an example of grace yielded to and the other the grace of God resisted? This is not the only lesson of the cross to Erskine, for he affirms, we are all on the cross, the appointed way to Paradise, through the righteous love of God. Man can yield to, or resist, the wooings of divine grace. This is implied in the words ... "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did". Why? . What brings about the difference? We see results but not the causes. We do not see anything in the first vessel, which gives the hope of the second to rise out of the wreck.

In like manner, we know not the subtle workings which result, either in hope frustrated or fulfilled. The same is true, when we try to explain how a man has it in his power to cast in his lot, either with the first, or second vessel. Still, the fact remains, man has the power to choose either good or evil. That in Scripture is distinctly assumed. And there is no respect of persons; every man is called with a call of might and power. But a man to justify himself might well ask whether indeed that very same thing which in those who are saved grows up into the second vessel, is also bestowed on those, who are lost and is only prevented from growing up in them likewise, by their own contrary choice? And /

And Erskine's answer is, we can, as in nature, see seeds of the two vessels lying side by side. In our Lord's reply to the Greeks, who came to Him, Erskine shows the germ must break the outer covering and die. Man is more than a grain of corn. The latter has two elements, the former three, i.e. flesh, spirit, plus personality. The grain of wheat has no choice. Man has.. He fixes his destiny by his choice. We have no need, therefore, to wait for the spiritual life in men before we can say life is in him, and its non-appearance is not a sign, either, that life is not there. Changing the metaphor, light is in every man. In other words, Jesus, the true light, is in all men. Two powers, therefore, seek man's will - the flesh and Christ. Man has not to create, but simply to follow one or other of these two powers. It was this aspect of Calvinism, viz. no good in man, but what is of the direct acting of the Spirit that set forth the worth of Calvinism, and no theory that left out that principle in any criticism of Calvinism was recognised as valid by Erskine. There is an appeal made to those who are attached to Calvinism, because they think there is danger of attributing to man glory for his own part in his salvation. Created things in their power show the glory of God, but man can render to God a greater glory - the freewill offering of his love. That glory man can keep back. Is it not glory to God, when a man says, all my well-springs are in Thee? Man's responsibility lies in his power to follow, or reject the inward drawing of God. His personal choice decided the matter. And judgment on either choice is not deferred till after death. Faithfulness in following the light intensifies and increases the first light, whereas unfaithfulness hardens the conscience, so that the voice which is continually saying "I will instruct thee" becomes dimmer or fainter, but, to the faithful the voice is ever more and more certain.

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At this point, Erskine enters upon one of his illuminating studies of conscience, and proves his power as a psychologist of no mean order. The voice in conscience is not a faculty in man's nature, such as the feelings of benevolence and compassion. Some may think so. There is a difference in order as regards conscience and the other feelings. We can appreciate the difference, because we know, however feeble the call of conscience may be, unless we obey we are conscious of giving place to evil. On the other hand, there is a danger even for those who recognise the one-ness of God with the voice of conscience, lest God be so identified with the voice, that God be brought down to a mere intimation of right or wrong, instead of hearing in the voice a call to the soul to reach up to the Eternal, who indeed sends forth the voice to lead men to Himself. The link between the flesh and spirit is conscience. The voice of God enters a man by the way of Conscience, or, in other words, the voice of the living Word enters into man. And this is the same Word, who is nigh unto every man in his mouth and in his heart. The Bible is given to us that it may tell us things in our heart which are true and thereby lead us to seek Him and to enjoy the divine strength, for the conquest over evil. Jesus Christ is not merely a historic figure, but the living Christ, abiding in our heart. The Bible does not make things true, but is like anatomy, which can describe but cannot create, neither is able to furnish what may be lacking. The Bible tells man that the voice within which condemns wrongdoing is the living word of God. It does not make a Saviour for man, but affirms man has a Saviour, and a Father, who has often been falsely represented as a taskmaster and judge only. To say that man, by the fall, lost the power to do good, is true, but many forget to add that this power has been restored, where sin abounded grace hath much more abounded.

Man's /

Man's responsibility in regard to the nature of his choice, good or evil, is established in many parts of the word of God. John, 7 and 17, makes the matter clear, "If a man will to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God". Man's responsibility is also emphasised in the Parable of the Sower though extreme Calvinists saw in that same parable verification for their creed. The different ways in which men heard the voice were supposed to be unalterable facts in human life. ' Election was based on these supposed unalterable realities, but Erskine meets this violence of interpretation with the words, "He that hath ears to hear", and "Take heed how you hear". Now, if the popular idea of Election holds, then the words of the great Teacher are only mocking words.

What is the word sown? That is generally identified with the outward word heard and read.

There is, however, a deeper meaning. This refers chiefly to the inner word in the soul, the existence of which indicates the difference between man and the beast of the field. And that inner word is Christ, Himself. His spirit speaking in the heart is the incorruptible seed. To recognise this fact means the reign of God has begun in the heart of man. The Parable of The Tares differs from that of The Sower, but differs only in this, that the seed of the sower has done its work and has become part of man himself, so vitally indeed, that the two cannot be contemplated apart. He who yields himself to the good seed is called wheat, and he who yields to evil is termed tares. There is a responsibility which is universal, and that universality is emphatic in the word, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear". The good seed of the kingdom must grow in the heart of man, because of his willingness to co-operate moment by moment with God, who will not permit the reapers to pull up the tares, lest men lose the blessings and discipline of victory, achieved by continual striving to enter in at the straight gate.

In his exposition of the Parable of the Hid Treasure, Erskine still rings the changes on man's responsibility. The Hid Treasure is Christ Himself, for His spirit is the seed sown in every heart, which must consent to be broken and destroyed before the hope and life of the second vessel fills the human soul. That breaking is selling all. By the fall, men lost spiritual life, but Christ comes to such dead ones and says, "Live". Man, not being matter, can resist this call. That is, the will of man can resist the mighty word of the Eternal. Still, though man resists, the word abides in him and man knows it, but, when resistance ceases, and man becomes sensible of the presence of the word, then he finds himself in union with a mighty power which will fulfil its purpose.

So long as man trusts the temporal in preference to the unseen and eternal, he is under sentence of death, and, yet all the same, the mighty word of God is in him: That is the significance of the words, "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead", then power will be conferred to join himself to the good seed. The sleeper has no power in himself, but he can yield to the power.

To live in the flesh means to live by man's own wisdom and strength which he feels to be his own, the evil one meanwhile, veiling the fact that there is any domination upon his part, and human pride is gratified because all is from self. It is not so with the life of faith, which listens to the inner voice or word, knows it to be the voice of God and rests on God Himself. There is then a difference between information and faith. We may know the way of life and yet not be living. This is what is meant by the rebuke, "Ye seek me not for spiritual but material bread". Man is placed between two forces, and he can choose which to follow. To obey the word and to follow it is to walk in the narrow way, and /

and personal election is the exclusive portion of those who walk in it. The continuous presence of God in the heart is manifested in the teaching and drawing of the Father and obedience makes, or creates proof for the soul, that it is indeed the Father who is heard and draws.

One is amazed at the wealth of language and illustration which Erskine brings to the elucidation of his subject. His readings of the word are often original and reveal the strength of a penetrating, spiritual mind. And yet, with all that, it is easily seen, Erskine is never just fully satisfied with what he has written, and the reader, passing to a new chapter of this book, discovers it is a reiteration of what has preceded - only now presented under the guise of different illustrations and similes. This, no doubt, arises from the feeling that Erskine was dealing with a very peculiar constituency of readers, who required different modes of presentation. And so it is we find appeals to the intellect and to the heart, to the ignorant and prejudiced, to the man steeped in the spirit of the word, before which he trembles as the Jew in ancient times. Erskine was also very careful to meet half-way sincere and honest hearts. He tried to remove their fears lest his message was one, more of destruction than of helpfulness. He was no roughshod reformer, but one who believed that the past had lessons for the present. Certainly, Erskine, with all his obscurity and redundancy, is the despair of those who seek to proclaim the truth and to deal in the wares of the soul. Sometimes in the course of an involved bit of reasoning, not always expressed very clearly, the reader comes across a phrase or a sentence illuminating and memorable. There is for example - "the winged restless thoughts which fly through the heart". No sentence could so describe Erskine's own calling as a teacher of righteousness so well as, "we are not uninterested spectators of this /

this wonderful contest that is going on within us". How living is the sentence, "On this unseen ground of the heart", the question of every man's religion is determined". How penetrating is Erskine's conception of The Supper ... "This is the Lord's Supper, to feed with Christ on his Father's will, which crucifieth the will of man". To all spurious presentations of truth Erskine offered a stout resistance... "There is no real seeking after eternal life, except in turning to that word; and that word is only turned to in truth by those, who are prepared to lay down the present life, in the hope of a life of righteousness yet to be revealed".

What can better illustrate the ever returning fervour or topic nearest his heart ... "as a physician waits for certain symptoms in his patient, before he can use particular medicines, so the Father waits for his turning of the ear before He can give any one to the Son".

When dealing in chapter 4, p. 80, with the various texts of Scripture which, at first sight, seem opposed to the positions taken up by Erskine, on the strength of other quotations from Scripture, Erskine manifests his perfect command of Biblical knowledge, and brings a most refreshing and original exegesis to bear on the elucidation of the various difficulties or seeming contradictions. Here, again, in all his argument he never loses sight of man's responsibility for his personal election. One striking sentence in which this is done runs thus ... "In our natural birth we are altogether passive; in our regeneration our own consent is necessary - we must yield ourselves to the quickening word - we must hear and understand". His general conclusion from the texts opposed to those on which Erskine's thesis, for Elections, by man's deliberate choice, is summed up in the words ... "they teach how a man may turn to God, how an unconverted man may become converted; and they encourage him to the work, by assuring /

assuring him that God will meet him in it with fresh supplies of grace". All this cuts away the foundations for the mere exercise of sovereignty on the part of God. God, indeed, takes the first step, but no one becomes a partaker of salvation on any other ground than his own turning to God. Grace must be received as coming from God personally. This is emphasised in one of the illuminating sentences to which reference has been made ... "The natural life flows on without any need of recognising its source; but every moment of the spiritual life depends on a personal recognition of God".

To the objection that man's responsibility, which ends either in life or death, infringes on the Sovereign Will of God, the reply is the retributive rule rests on God's own sovereign gift of spiritual life in Jesus Christ. Had Erskine been facing the problems of the present the questions would arise, why was man created at all? Has man not a right to get an answer? Erskine is, however, not faced with this difficulty, though he seems to see that difficulty in the background. God has a right to give men talents, just as He wills, but leave to men the responsibility in their use or abuse. What about circumstances? How will men be judged according to their opportunities for instance in learning the story of the Cross? In his answer to this question Erskine reveals the breadth and sympathy of his mind. And he answers by saying the judgment will depend on the amount of light enjoyed. And the answer to the issue before Erskine is summed up by him in these words, "The allotment of five talents, or of two, or of one, is of sovereignty, but the praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant", and the blame, "O thou wicked and slothful servant", are of righteous judgment".

Erskine was alive to the fact that criticism would demand /

demand explanation of "the inward word". What is it? Does it not nullify the Word made flesh and the record of the revealed word? These questions are answered by affirming that it was only because of these outward manifestations in Christ and the Bible, that the inward word was vouchsafed, for in Christ our righteousness, the purposes of God were either anticipated or fulfilled. Christ is the necessary link between man and God. He is the channel of all blessing. But what is this inward word?

Erskine calls it a pulsation of the Divine nature and this pulsation is communicated to every individual of the race. And therefore, apart altogether from the Bible, because of the work of our Divine Head, a seed of spiritual life throbs or stirs in every son of Adam. So that in Erskine's view the Bible is not suffering any detraction from the reality of the inward word.

The outward word must be read in conjunction with the inward word. That idea gave rise to criticism. Erskine does not disparage the word, he only warns readers against formality. Mere formal reading of the Bible, or understanding the theology of the revealed word, apart from communion with God is not profitable. And yet Erskine would not advise any against this study. Why? Because "the Bible has an intrinsic aptitude to produce faith". The revealed word not only manifests the divine, but it also reveals man to himself. So that on the heart of man two forces are impinging - the outward and the inward word. All this is to bring the mind of man into harmony with the mind of God.

That Erskine is sincere in his attitude we see from the fact that he would encourage apologetics, for, inspiration, even although he may fear lest men lose the reality by a mere assent to truth, instead of resting on a living faith in God Himself. Another consideration in his mind is that one who reads /

reads the revealed word is more likely to experience the reality than the man who neglects the message.

Erskine has a great capacity for balancing facts. So much so that sometimes the prisoner he is seeking to hold eludes him. In the details, and efforts to conciliate opponents the main issue appears to be so involved that the ordinary reader is bewildered.

There is faith and its counterfeit.

To make either the Bible or the Church the substitute for a living communion with God was unthinkable since "no man can come to Me except the Father draw him". The outward word is a call to the inward word and in this way, either by the reading of the word, or the preaching of the Evangel, souls are saved. The awakening of the attention to God's dealings in the soul, and to His Word sown in our hearts, so that we seek after God, gives proof that the spiritual life has begun in the heart of a man. Our faith in God does not rest on the mere testimony of man. No, but on the witness of God Himself. And this witness of God is different and of a higher kind. And for one man to understand another, who says he has the testimony of God in his heart, this man can only be understood by a like experience in his heart. This whole discussion Erskine sums up in one of those sentences which are the flashlights to illumine the darkness ... "faith is conviction formed in the light of God's spirit; and no other conviction is faith". Men dread this intimate communion. Like the Israelites, they would hear and see God through a Moses. And yet apart from this communion, we can only know God as a giver of laws and commands. But the divine ideal is that we should know God as a Father. Otherwise, religion is taken for God. This subtle temptation of the evil one must be guarded against. No doctrine apart from God Himself is of saving efficacy. Even /



Even the doctrine of Justification may give some religious confidence, at least there is that suspicion, but confidence is impossible even there, without the conscious presence of God. Doctrines may be as fatal to the soul as crucifixes or rosaries.

The Bible leads to faith but they only are fully blessed, who receive the Bible on the testimony of one who is greater.

The wooings of the flesh are apt to be mixed up with the call of the spirit. In this state truth may be received in a measure and without fruit. The Bible calls forth the echo of the inward word, and the motions of the flesh are thwarted. This was Christ's test. He claimed to be believed because his words found an echo in the hearts of those who heard Him. It is not only the outward voice that said, "Hear ye him", but the inner voice of God in the heart gives the same testimony. Miracles cannot take the place of faith. John did no miracle and yet our Lord condemned the rulers for their faithlessness in regard to the message of John the Baptist. Men discover the life that is in Christ, not because of any arbitrary choice on the part of God. The life divine through our great Head, Jesus Christ, is for all who will open the heart to the light or will find in their heart the echo of the inward word bearing testimony to the call of Jesus, "Come unto Me". Our response is love, which manifests itself in obedience and obedience in the power of the Spirit is rewarded in the growing consciousness of moral strength and an ever fuller understanding of the will of God.

The pages devoted to the exposition of this theme of Election is the work of one who could lay little claim to be an expert in exegesis. Erskine, himself, felt this. "To the general reader the exegetical chapters may be tedious and can be passed over".

There /

There is a greater objection to these chapters, for one feels in studying them that Paul and his Letter to the Romans are made to suit and to bend to the theories of Erskine, and just because of this the exegetical part of his work is not of great value.

Human responsibility is the great theme of this work of Erskine on Election. Previously, he had dealt with the conditions of belief, but not with the responsibility of man's actions; there is, indeed, the feeling in the mind of the reader of Election that Erskine does not fully represent the Biblical idea of the gift of God in Jesus Christ. To Erskine that gift is a drawing towards it - not the absolute gift of salvation. Christian experience, however, surely testifies to the reality that it is not a mere drawing to life, but to life itself abiding and energising in us.

AN APPRECIATION of THE SPIRITUAL ORDER and OTHER PAPER.

ERSKINE. EDINBURGH. EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS. 1871.

Though the reader of Erskine's works is continually baffled with the changing thoughts and outlook of the author, Erskine himself was anxious in the last years of his life to reach a synthesis, but infirmity and a certain fastidiousness, that never was satisfied, kept him from the fulfilment of his desire. He felt he had a message to the age in which he lived, and left a dying charge that his papers might be put in order and published. These papers were the beginnings or notes of a final order. It is well that this was done. The book reveals what other works had already done, viz. to show Erskine in the light of a pioneer of thought, anticipating in a tentative way a mode of approach to spiritual phenomena with which we are now tolerably familiar. The doctrine or theory of material and animal order is to the student of Christianity crowned and complete in the Spiritual Order of Evolution.

Erskine's Spiritual Order puts into definite terms a subject which had occupied his mind from the earliest days of his religious studies. That subject was the universal restoration of men. In his various books and letters reference is made to this theme, but Erskine, in the Spiritual Order, makes it no longer tentative, but plain and, perhaps, this stand for Universalism is his supreme contribution with which his name in this country will be associated.

The Life of Jesus by M. Renan greatly interested Erskine. In the opening chapter of The Spiritual Order, he points out that Renan's criticism of the Life of Jesus by Strauss, which errs in being too theological and not sufficiently historical, emphasises the weakness of Renan's work, which, on the other hand, practically ignores the theological aspect of the work of Jesus. Erskine had no sympathy with preaching neglectful of theology and less with critics who wrote /

wrote as if theology was an effete system. The central element in the work of the historic Christ was to reveal the Kingdom of God, and proclaim the call of God the Father to all men, that a refuge from the evil in the world and in the heart was to be found within the Kingdom. Jesus revealed God as Father, as loving and righteous and to get to the inwardness of that message, the teaching of Jesus must not and can never be, separated from His life. And from the teaching and life of Christ there comes a power, which, given a chance, transforms character and will yet regenerate the world. When Jesus began to teach, those who afterwards became his bitterest enemies found in his message moral and spiritual truth with which they, through tradition and teaching, were familiar. What staggered them was just what Renan ignores, viz. his unique claim to be The Son of God, "who never sought nor found for Himself a place among the sons of men". To this, the answer of Renan is, this was only self-preaching on the part of Jesus, but, as Erskine shows, self-preaching cannot tally with the claim, "I am the Vine, The Bread, The Door, I am the Shepherd". In all these claims Jesus is not emphasising his claims, but those of The Father who, though He has committed all judgment to the Son, has sent the Son, to whom no one can come unless the Father draw him, and, on the Father, the Son is ever dependent. Erskine shows Renan avoiding the issue, either Christ was an imposter, or what He claimed to be betrays the consciousness that there was a something in Christ which had eluded Him, even although he says Jesus was "the best and wisest and greatest man that ever lived".

Very subtly Erskine shows that we can learn a lesson from the mistakes of the great, but, though Renan claims his Life of Jesus as "Historic", he, at the same time, ignores the historic facts behind the great claims of Christ. These surely /

surely call for a deeper answer than pretensions or self-preaching. To Renan that inquiry is fruitless, because it is theological. Renan saw the moral beauties of the teaching of Jesus, but he also failed to see that these beauties cannot of themselves grow in human hearts, and therefore it is the duty of the wise historian to examine, whether in the revelation of the character of God and His relations to man, revealed by Christ, there were not the reasons for the transformed lives achieved by the Gospel. Erskine affirms, if this had been done by Renan, the Spiritual Order affirmed by Christianity would have become apparent. Only the self-sacrificing love of God is sufficient to explain Christian character, and the supernatural claims of Jesus by which that self-sacrificing love of God is made known. Erskine, like the scientist, appeals to facts. And in Christian experience, he finds facts. Thus he says, if Renan had only considered that man might find in sorrow and suffering something in Christianity which proved suffering and sorrow to be in the nature of duty, and that these experiences were in the loving purpose of a divine Father to a son, and, if with this light or leading, Renan had examined other human experiences he might have concluded that just as a good citizen cannot be such apart from a knowledge of his country's traditions and his personal relations to these, and just as a member of a family must observe the same rule, so no one can be a member of the Spiritual Order till he knows its history and his relations thereto.

Is there, asks Erskine, a Spiritual Order?

And once more he appeals in his own inimitable way to psychology or the content of consciousness. What is this call in the heart of goodness? Why is man impelled by right feelings? What is the origin of right intentions and actions? Do these facts not imply a Spiritual Order, or Cosmos? A social /

social order does not make such demands as this Spiritual Order, for outwardly we may conform to be at least passable citizens of a social order, but in the Spiritual Order things are more searching, since it is not only outward but also inner conformity of the secret heart that is called for. Christianity, according to Erskine, assumes this Order exists and all men by nature belong to it, and in its precepts and examples of practice it reveals a power capable of transforming all hearts.

Erskine's conception of the Spiritual Order as it is developed in the first chapter implies, first, An Eternal God, who is a righteous Father; secondly, a Cosmos ruled by this Eternal One: thirdly, at the apex of this creation is man - Ephesians 2:10 - the divine masterpiece, yet, not perfect, but standing in need of discipline and education, mentally and morally. From that Erskine passes to the declaration, that from the very nature of these facts, the supreme purpose of God in creation, from one point of view, is the education of man. And only One like God, whom man can know, and to whom man can be drawn and attracted through sympathy and love, is able to accomplish this work of education.

Now, if this be true, then in man there must be a consciousness that these Divine operations in his heart are distinct from the faculties by which these divine elements are known. If not, then there is the fear that philosophy will take the place of religion, which will be a self-raised business. Pride will be begotten in place of reverence. Abstractions will take the place of personal relation with God. Abstractions become dogmas of the schools, whereas what is required is a religion for the race.

There may be objections to such a religion, not only because it is supernatural, but contrary to religion.

There is a physical order in the world as known to us.  
The /

The world of matter is obedient to law, but that obedience is altogether different in the moral and spiritual order. Man, when crushed by nature, knows it, but nature understands not. It is for this that the physical order is not superior to the moral and spiritual, whilst at the same time, both form a part in the mighty scheme of things.

Christianity, whose centre is the Word made flesh, has its counterpart in man's spiritual intelligence, for the heart is not completely dependent on outside authority or teaching. To Christianity there cannot be attributed this likeness in man to the facts revealed. Christianity calls attention to this likeness, which is the very substance of man's spirit though the knowledge and power of this created gift may be a knowledge unused by man. The facts of Christianity fit into the folds of our moral and spiritual nature. The bird for the air, and the fish for the sea, and man for fellowship with God.

Now all this may be accepted as true of God, but not of Christ. Can these relationships between God and man be identified with Christ as Christianity claims? Erskine answers this question, and in doing so displays his wonderful command of dealing with moral and spiritual phenomena. The central fact of Christianity is the revelation by Jesus of the Fatherhood of God.

And no religion is of any importance or theory of religion, that leaves out that truth. It is the light which guides Erskine through ignorance and darkness to certainty and hope. The doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood is a fact which harmonises with the divine nature and character as conceived in the mind of man. The revelation of Jesus Christ meets man's reason. Is there reasonableness in the divinity of Christ? Erskine answers, yes, since he is sure there must be in the nature of the Godhead a fact analogous to the reality /



reality of Father and Son without deciding whether Christ be that Son or not.

We say Christ is the Eternal Son of The Father in answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" In the days of His flesh the people did not realise the importance of the question, but it is an inquiry that has come as a challenge to every age since the time it was first uttered. The Gospels reveal that Christ preached Himself more than moral duties because He is the power through which all moral and spiritual duties are fulfilled. Now, in self-preaching, as Renan puts it, Jesus made known to men revelations and thoughts in regard to God both profound and original. God was the Fountain of all goodness. None is good save God. Goodness - but what is goodness? It is found in trust and trustworthiness. There is goodness in giving and receiving. Can these facts be postulated of God? Or does the Unity and Sovereignty of God preclude us from saying these are in God? If we so assert, then there is a form of goodness which is not in God. All goodness, according to Erskine, originates and is in God. Every form of goodness then must have a corresponding recipient form. And so, in the divine nature, there must be two personalities representing Giver and Receiver, otherwise for the display of goodness, therefore, there could be no possibility apart from the creature. God could not have sympathy with Himself. God is love, and love seeks sympathy. And, if the divine Unity interposes, then there is no sympathy within the nature of God, and therefore there would be compulsion to create. Relief for all this is found in the Eternal Sonship. Here, again, there may be the criticism that such a God is only human after all. In a striking sentence Erskine answers this. He points out there are two hemispheres in God - Giver and Receiver, Father and Son. Unity is not singleness but completeness, and the reality of Father /

Father and Son finds completion in a Common Spirit. Spiritual creation stands also in the Son, which implies it also is included in the fellowship of Love. "I and my Father are one", said Jesus, and added, "My Father is greater than I", which means, as God, he was equal with the Father, but, as man, inferior. The uniqueness of the revelation of Jesus is manifestation of God as a Giver and Receiver. God is love, according to John, and, out of the fulness of that love, pours into the Son's all-embracing capacity love and wisdom, not for himself alone, but, as the Head and First-begotten of the whole creation. The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament is one of creation and sovereignty only, though there are adumbrations of greater things to come. It is in Christ we see the fulness of the divine Fatherhood. This love has come to man through the eternal Sonship in Jesus Christ. And the message of the Son is that the Almighty Father created only for good, and since man has been so created, then man is meant to share and participate in the divine fulness. Now, this participation depends on the indwelling of the Son in the human heart to which the Son communicates the very nature of his own goodness.

Hence it is that Christian morality finds its roots in Christian theology. Do we receive this doctrine on authority only? Erskine confesses he is amazed at the general belief in such a doctrine, and, whilst not basing the doctrine on authority, affirms there is in humanity a craving for such a Daysman as Jesus claims to be. Further, it is his belief that those who have held the doctrine have seen in it some light, which, though they could not describe or explain, yet the light has brought them into hallowed relations with the divine Father.

Men are not disorganised units. And just as a living mind for its thoughts demands a nexus, so there is in the heart /

heart of humanity a craving for unity and order, which Erskine's mind sees in the Fatherhood of God communicating of his fulness to the Son, the Head of the race, which, in turn, receives from the Son of the fulness of God.

It was easier for the Gentile world to receive the notion implied in the term of God than even the Israelite. But it was fitting the truth should be manifested first in Israel.

Erskine has been criticised for his neglect of the historic Christ just as Paul was accused, but, like the apostle to the Gentiles, Erskine excels, when he gives in his own words his synthesis of the historic Christ. In the last paragraph on page 45 there is a description of Jesus of Nazareth which compares with the words of Paul in Philippians Chapter 2, verse 7.

Erskine believed he had more of the presence of God when he wrote *The Brazen Serpent*, than he had in his other compositions, but to this statement there can be added the experience of most of his readers - wonder at Erskine's power in a word, a phrase, or a sentence, to bring light to a truth, and set in motion a train of thought.

#### The Purpose of God.

Behind the Spiritual Order, as conceived by Erskine, there was the working mind and heart of the divine Father. What was the purpose of the Eternal in regard to Man? Erskine sets himself to examine this question in his own characteristic way. And in doing so he makes very definite what hitherto had been coming up in his mind as set forth in letters and conversations with friends. Again, in his arguments, he reveals the mysticism of his mind and also his great genius in dealing with the contents of the human mind and heart. What is a true religion? And where shall an answer /

answer be found? He turns to conscience and his own life; and a religion, in which he would have confidence, must explain both conscience and life. It is through conscience or the spiritual sense that we know of the higher world and it is on the battleground of the heart that man wages the fight either for goodness or evil. Conscience reveals in the heart a purpose not self originated, for we fight against it, yet this purpose dominates man and makes itself felt. It is at the very root of being. This purpose is not of education, which can draw out, but is not able to implant. What is this that is urged on man in conscience? It is God's purpose with us. And what is that? It is to make man a good man, says Erskine. This is religious footing for the next advance, that a purpose must have a Purposer. That purposer is the Creator, and his purpose indicates what he himself is. "There is no one good but God", said Christ, and He is this God who calls man to goodness in life and character.

And just because God is good, man can trust himself, indeed, everything, into his hands. This, Erskine affirms, is his first true conception of God. Natural Religion reveals the infinite power of God, but does not draw man near to God, for it gives only one aspect of the divine nature. It is different when the soul apprehends the fact that God is insisting on us the need to be like Himself. In that message and in man's endeavour to fulfil it the individuality or personality of the man is discovered. Man is distinct from the other works of God. No other creature can fill, in the same way, the place of another. God understands man. He is ever sustaining man. When this is understood and accepted then God is "My Father" as well as "Our Father". The purpose of God is to train men in His own righteousness. The purpose of God then is to educate. Our moral and mental qualities /

qualities seem to suggest this. When men are judged from this standard of judgment there seems little to show for this education. Can it be possible that the divine hand is at work. What of the slums? These are the products of minds crushed by want and urged by sensual gratification. Yet even in the hearts of such there is the call of God and a knowledge of that call. Erskine then turns the arguments thus, think of man's potentialities and capacities, for from these we may infer that we are, and the world is, under a discipline and educative purpose. The process seems long drawn out and the results poor, but will God be less patient with man than he is with the red sandstone fossil? God is calling men to righteousness, or, as Erskine puts it, into sympathy with Himself - the Eternal One. And the reason for the call is God is love. It is to know the love as an experience, and to return it is to show righteousness. We may thwart this love, but God never ceases urging it on us for our good. He marks and condemns error. That the divine heart never ceases to love is man's hope. Then Erskine definitely gives to the world his thought in regard to the final restoration of all. God will persevere until this is accomplished.

Erskine is not so much interested in race development as in the education of the individual. Each individual is immortal and apart from that there can be no religion for man. Erskine will not have it said that balancing the good and evil the former has predomination or, at least, is on the balance side and, therefore, though man's life really ends at death, he has nothing of which he may complain. That we can discern the excellency of goodness is a promise, on God's part, that under His guidance, we shall be fitted to fill the place which God has provided for each individual in His Spiritual Order. Life then is not probation, but education, /

education, for God is not a Judge, but a divine Father. We are indeed tested and tried, for, according to Erskine, "no education can go on without trial; but we are tried that we may be educated, not educated that we may be tried".

The two ideas of God as Judge and Father lead to different results. A judge acts according to laws; the love of a father is inextinguishable. But is there no law in the Gospel? Why did Jesus suffer outside the camp? Why is it said, "He bore the sins of many"? To these questions Erskine gives the reply that probation is not of the spirit of the Gospel. What about believing? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. The answer is the love of God is free, and death as a propitiation to justice, instead of resting on the fact that these are a manifestation of the righteousness of God, the outcome of love, which, whilst never ceasing to condemn our errors, yet at the same time can never cease to seek the deliverance of the soul from evil. All our thoughts of God and our relations to Him must take their colour from this divine purpose of educating man into His own likeness. At the same time the man who regards God simply as one whose righteousness we can understand and approve, but not one who loves, and one whom we can love, since love is the only completeness, only called forth by one to whom we can approach and know and love, has no assured hope. Love cannot fasten on an abstraction. Neither can we love a being, whom we cannot apprehend and trust. Pantheism had no place in the faith of Erskine; "I am persuaded", he says, (page 24), "that the whole spirit and power of Christianity are contained in the thing, which is meant by the word".

Knowability and accessibility lead us to love God. Then, because of this love, duty becomes not simply the desire to be right, but a joy; and it is through the abiding /

abiding joy we have in God, whose nature is both knowable and accessible, that we are able to resist the seductions of life and feel ourselves safe against them. Out of the divine love there must come power to us, enabling us to love the unloveable, and to ever turn to the divine love as to a living fountain. How is this brought about? We are not worthy yet the love of God is our portion for He loves us. He is not driven away by unloveliness, either in us or in our brother. The desire of God is to make all men worthy; it is the nature of righteous love to communicate itself. We are to co-operate with the love of God.

But the power is from God to me, in order that I may experience the love of God. And through that same power I love my brother. The Greek spoke of righteousness, but the Hebrew of the righteous One, and that to Erskine is the truest philosophy as well as the only religion.

In a social order, as we have seen, it is possible to be a recluse. Not so in family life, for here relationships are most intimate and close; but this is more so in the Spiritual Order, for here we are entirely dependent on God the Father, who sustains us, without whom we could not think or act ... How do we know this? Our conscious moral nature is furnishing that testimony, says Erskine. We can be in several orders, indeed, so much taken up with the social order, that we put out of our mind the spiritual, but the Spiritual Order exists and our happiness, or ill, is bound up with it.

Our reason, affirms Erskine, is only satisfied with theological assertions when these manifest themselves in practice. Now, if we see verification of the words, "Ye are the salt of the earth", and "Ye are the light of the world", then in the theology of these facts there must be a power behind them calling forth the practice. Coherence of practice and theory, and the dynamic of practice in obedience and faithfulness, /

faithfulness, love and grace form the greatest proof for Christianity. There is manifested in this Spiritual Order the counterpart of what we see in the law of gravitation, by which order is maintained in the world of nature.

Erskine here interposes a note of warning. Christianity, he says, imposes no beliefs on us, just that for believing's sake we may get good, without any reference to the character of God and moral relations to Him.

Creeds, set down without a nexus or explanation, do not help but hinder the acceptance of truth and may even propagate error, as in the Athanasian Creed, where merit is given in exchange for belief.

We may, says Erskine, translate into acts some of the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, but a little experience will manifest the inability of the unassisted heart to fulfil the supreme demands of these New Testament laws and principles. It is outwith our power to make midnight to become midday, so it is not in human ability to achieve the precepts of Jesus in practice. Only the power of love can accomplish such a task, but human love is not sufficient. Where is the power to be obtained? It is in God through His righteous love abiding and energising in us.

Our hearts condemn us, says Erskine, when we commit faults and display defects as natural to us as the colour of our hair. Is there justice in such natural phenomena? Yes, if these are meant to teach us that we are, and ever must be, dependent of God, not in an arbitrary sense, or that we may render to Him homage; no, but only because this dependence on God is a great reality, proving the Divine love on which the heart must live and thrive. Now this dependence is no defect. In a note, Erskine points out that in one of the prayers of the Genevese Liturgy, there is an expression which seems to indicate that men would have thought /



thought themselves in a better condition, if they had been capable of themselves to do at least some worthy, good thing. As we breathe by the will of God, so the life of the soul depends on our perpetual acceptance of the influence of spiritual gravitation. The planets, if for the moment we think of them with the power of choice, cannot emancipate themselves from the law of gravitation, and yet maintain "sweet order", no more can man, who has the power of choice, expect peace and order in his life, if conscience ignores the guiding Light of God and expects to find his true guidance in self-will. The planet must have a centre of gravity and gravitation to keep its proper course, so man has a centre, which, unlike the planet, he is free to choose or reject, and the centre for man is the will of God. If the planet does not require a chart, man does, in order to know whether self or God is guiding, and also to know if he had chosen the true centre, and is in truth following the law of God. It is not by effort of the will, lead by self, that we reach the purpose of life, but as we make our will, which is indeed ours, the divine will. That is in Erskine's opinion the purpose of Christianity. In a lecture on Progress in Philosophy by the late Viscount Haldane (Birkbeck College Centenary Lectures, 1823-1923, University of London Press, 1924) we have these words, "There is truth in that view, in the outlook of those who say, 'Never mind the supposed necessity of discovering some particular system which is to represent the truth.' There is no such system. It is the study of the whole. It is the striving after truth that is the reality, and that truth is something fixed and final, and beyond it is a delusion. All our systems, and our mode of viewing things are, after all, partial, and there was much in what Tennyson said, though he ended up with a metaphor which looks more theological than I should like to commit myself to:-"

"Our /

"Our little systems have their day;  
 They have their day and cease to be:  
 They are but broken lights of Thee,  
 And Thou, O Lord, are more than they".

page 32.

To Erskine, on the other hand,

"Our wills are ours to make them Thine".

Another thinker, R.H. Hutton, in his study of George Eliot as an author writes, "George Eliot, with a faith like that of her own Dinah, would to my mind have had one of the most effective intellects the world had ever seen. Her imagination would have gained that vivacity and spring, the absence of which is its only artistic defect; her noble ethical conceptions would have gained certainty and grandeur; her singularly just and impartial judgment would have lost the tinge of gloom, which seems always to pervade it; and her poetic feelings would have been no longer weighed down by the super-incumbent mass of a body of sceptical thought with which they struggled for the mastery in vain. Few minds, at once so speculative and so creative, have ever put their mark on literature. With a quicker pulse of life, with a richer, happier faith, I could hardly conceive the limit to her power".

How are we to learn to make a right choice? We must learn to know God that we may fully trust Him and love Him, not as the righteous Judge; but, he who strives continually after righteousness is on a higher plane morally than the man with the educative idea as the basis of his faith, who yet allows God's fatherly love to lower the holiness of God, and the divine abhorrence of evil. On the other hand the futility of effort may open a door to the free love of God as Father.

The evil in the world, and in the heart of the individual may appal us, but God condemns this evil and calls on men to work for righteousness, and will never cease so doing till /

till all are fellow-workers with Him. Atheism denies this which is the basis of theism. Obliteration of the sinner is not victory, but defeat, for God. It is in correction and education that the victorious will of God is displayed. In God, mercy and justice, asserts Erskine, are the same thing.

All these points are advocated with a zeal and enthusiasm only possible in one, who himself was pure in heart, and therefore saw more clearly the tenderness in the heart of the Eternal Father.

#### The Bible in Relation to Faith.

Erskine was not greatly interested in Biblical criticism as a necessary corollary of the scientific spirit of the 19th. century. His age, and lack of equipment, were hindrances; but if, from that point of view, he was not interested, he was very doubtful of the influence, which this new spirit of inquiry would have on uneducated minds. And so we find Erskine is timorous in face of the new forces. He did not think the ordinary mind was ready for such conclusions as Colenso had reached, and so we find Erskine expostulating with the Bishop, and asking if it was wise to disturb the feelings and minds of good and earnest people. This tenderness for the prejudices and ignorance of the faithful was very characteristic of Erskine.

What is Erskine's attitude towards the Bible? In some respects it was as revolutionary as the view of Colenso. It must be borne in mind that to most people in the Scottish Church verbal inspiration was an established fact. To think otherwise was not far short of blasphemy. Now, Erskine, even as Colenso from another point of view, takes for granted many commonsense views of the Bible, which were assuredly not part of the common stock of beliefs. The doctrine of the Bible /

Bible according to Erskine must satisfy reason and judgment, as this is directed by conscience. And yet reason is suspect, inasmuch as it savours of presumption, and is contrary also to faith, which some think is opposed to knowledge. To Erskine the Bible was necessary as an outward communication apart from which man could not have been able to arrive at the truths communicated. Yet he also sees this truth must satisfy the mind, which calls for coherency and reasonableness. These he finds in the Bible. The theories, or guesses, concerning the natural world are supported by the deductions of the science of mathematics, so the Bible fits in to all those facts, which tally with the ideas of a Spiritual Order. We are not to believe because the church affirms, this is the faith once delivered to the saints, or because certain writers two thousand years ago wrote a life of Jesus of Nazareth. Each man must find in the facts a light, or moral power, which satisfies reason and conscience. This, Erskine experienced in his spiritual life. And why should it not be so? - for Erskine is very explicit in affirming the Bible assumes this must be the natural attitude in which man should read the word. The authority of the Bible furnishes facts to which the Christian consciousness assents. If our faith only rests on authority, apart from a knowledge of God revealed in Christ and our personal relations to God in Christ, then we are in a hopeless position in face of criticism. To insist on rightness, and reasonableness in revelation does not detract from the honour of God. On the contrary it is giving God the glory out of hearts created by Him to allow not only authority, but also judgment, reasonableness and conscience to have their proper place. A faith apart from such a spirit is no faith at all. It may, however, be asked, Do circumstances not modify the value of conscience? Is it an infallible guide? But how apart /

apart from conscience can we know the infallibility of any guidance? We are responsible. Any guidance which fails to bring the heart nearer God is false. A guide who does not help me in this is failing in duty. Authority and spiritual experience must go together. Christianity is a revelation of moral and spiritual facts as real as physical facts and this reality we can perceive and experience. The Bible is not given to man to believe apart from the testimony of his inner conscience and common sense. To what Erskine has said he finds also reason for the claims of the Bible as the Word of God in the genius of the Jewish race for righteousness, as the Greeks had the genius of Art. There are gleams of light in the writings of individuals such as Socrates, but the light of the Bible is that which comes from a people to whom the greatest thing in the world was righteousness. This, says Erskine, was the direct choice of God, that in Israel all mankind should be blessed. The uniqueness of the fact is a proof of divine interposition. The Gentile always applied to God, or the gods, power, whereas Israel emphasises righteousness which, according to Erskine, is certainly moulding the whole life of society.

These positions held by Erskine are similar to the thoughts of Coleridge on the same theme. Naturally we ask what influence Coleridge had on the formation of Erskine's opinions. We have asserted already that nearly all the positions taken up by Erskine in his first book form the groundwork for what he afterwards develops. There can be no doubt in the mind of any one who compares the Aids to Reflection by Coleridge with what is found in the writings of Erskine that there is a striking similarity in the sententious style of the one author with the other. In the part of the Aids, "Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion", we must be struck with a certain likeness of expression. The reader /

reader of Erskine is familiar with the idea - Christianity is not a theory, or a speculation, but a life. Not a philosophy of life, but life and a living process. A moral evil is an evil that has its origin in the will. An evil common to all must have a ground common to all. . Now, this evil ground cannot originate in the Divine Will; it must, therefore, be referred to the will of man. "Evidence of Christianity" I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it; and you may safely trust it to his own evidence - remembering only the express declaration of Christ himself, "No man cometh to Me, unless the Father leadeth him". "I deem it impious and absurd to hold that the Creator would have given us the faculty of reason or that the Redeemer would, in so many varied forms of argument and persuasion, have appealed to it, if it had been useless or impotent". Erskine was evidently a reader of Coleridge, as he was of Foster, and Law, but, if it is true that Erskine's thoughts in his later books were in embryo in his first, then all we can say is Coleridge influences the style of Erskine, but did not give him the thought. Both writers are difficult to read. What reason have we for this conclusion. The evidence is this. The Internal Evidence and Essay on Faith were published respectively in 1820, 1822, and the Aids to Reflection in 1825.

The closing chapter in The Spiritual Order is devoted to the Epistle to the Romans, which formed so large a part in the Doctrine of Election. The one new element, though indeed not new but emphasised, is the declaration on the part of Erskine that his mature belief, founded on Paul's words in regard to Final Restoration, is that all shall be saved. There shall not be one lost good.

REMARKS on SOME of ERSKINE'S LETTERS.

With the publication of the Letters of Thomas Erskine in 1877, several years after the writer's death, there was given to those interested in the history and development of religious thought in Scotland a precious legacy and heritage.

Erskine in his letters is seen in many different circumstances and conditions, and yet he is always most engaged in the one thing which made life to him interesting and worth living, and this one thing was the advancement of Divine truth in his own heart and in the world: not the advancement of Divine truth as truth only, but the expression of truth in the character of men and nations. To him that was the one hope for the world; men and nations in conduct must express the laws and principles of the Kingdom of God.

Erskine came of a family, among the members of which there were names well known in the history of religious thought in Scotland. If Erskine be taken as an example of the law of heredity, he was in the line both of law and grace. It was a bold thing on the part of Erskine in those days to be pioneer of religious thought "ex cathedra", but he successfully achieved his purpose, and, though he is known only to a few as a writer, his position in Scotland as thinker, writer, and saint is assured.

We have said Erskine was dominated by one principle; of him the words are true, "One thing I do". Destined to great possessions, and occupying a position of honour as Laird of Linlathen he subordinated these possessions, and that honour, to The Pearl of Great Price and to the calling of the least of all saints. From his letters we see him as a steward of the things given to him. The hospitality of his home and his genius for friendship was used in the interests of The Kingdom of God.

From the Letters we see how many enjoyed his hospitality and friendship from which there came to Scottish religious /



religious thought great enrichment. Erskine, too, recognised that love of God implied the spirit of brotherhood, for, from one of his communications we learn how, when times were hard, he did not turn away men to stand idle in the market place, but engaged more labourers, to the curtailment of his liberality towards causes, which lay near his heart, and restriction to his own privileges and comforts.

Erskine wrote to all sorts and conditions of men and women. These correspondents grew in number through his love of travel and by reason of the interest aroused in the new and original views set forth in his writings. We have letters in the volumes, edited by Dr. Hanna, to and from leaders of thought such as Chalmers, Carlyle, Bishop Ewing, Bishop Colenso, Vinet, Maurice, McLeod Campbell, and hosts of others. There are the letters to foreign correspondents, such as Madame Vernet and the Duchess de Broglie, daughter of the celebrated Madame de Stael. The working man finds a place in the list and the unknown correspondent. There are letters of expostulation, warning, comfort and exposition, but through the whole correspondence there runs the golden thread of love and good fellowship. Erskine had a most appreciative mind; he does not require the injunction, criticise less and praise more but, yet, the praise is never overdone. That gift, too, of associating all his correspondents in the high fellowship of his own heart and work, places Erskine alongside another religious thinker and leader - The Apostle Paul.

Were it only for the letter, which Erskine's called forth from Carlyle in regard to the Lord's Prayer, these two volumes of Letters will not have been issued in vain.

Erskine wrote many letters to the various members of the Erskine family; letters of comfort; <sup>(1)</sup> letters to remove /

(1) App. 6.

remove the doubts and fears of loved ones concerning his views on religious topics; letters explaining more fully the thoughts which passed through his mind and found a place in his books; letters filled with the ordinary routine of daily life, but letters also which never left the reader in doubt of (1) the zeal of the writer for religious principles; (2) the desire to lead others to share with himself the peace and strength, which he believed his views were capable of bringing to the heart.

To one of these relatives, "The dear, dear Cousin Rachel", he wrote, says Hanna, "the longest and in some respects the more interesting series". Now it is Erskine's thoughts on religion, and the description of his wrestling with truth, which make these letters specially valuable. In 1826 he gives his cousin a description of two friends whom he had just met on the Continent, Madame de Broglie and Madame Vernet, but the description gives no details of any adornment save that of the soul. Madame de Broglie has about her the atmosphere of one who knows the truth and had no traffic with what is "little and low in character"; "she is occupied with the thoughts and interests of Eternity". Of Madame Vernet he writes, "She always puts me in mind of a well of water springing up into everlasting life".

Erskine was always interested in psychological phenomena and therefore he is careful to note all kinds and forms of belief held by others; "My friend Gaussen of Geneva", he says, "holds that the spirit is in a state of total insensibility from the instant of death and judgment is in this way absolutely annihilated for them".

The mind of Erskine was not of a morbid description. He could enjoy life, and laughter to him was not an unknown experience, but he is careful to inform his correspondent of the fact - "I have seen a deathbed to-day", and adds he seems to have a particular destiny for such experiences.

Erskine /

Erskine lived and moved in religious thoughts. Was he about to climb one of the mountains overlooking the Rhone on its way to the Lake of Geneva, then by association of ideas he exclaims "Lead us to the Rock that is higher than we are".

With his fellow-travellers he is well content; they are remarkably civil but not the society with whom he is accustomed: "they know nothing of God or Eternity", and it seems an awful thing to say of any one born and educated in England, the land of Bibles. Perhaps Erskine himself was as great a problem to his companions; to him the business of life was peace with God and a holy ingenuity, separated from all fear of consequences, enabled him to speak of the worth of The King.

Religion to him was a continuous call to life, and life became for Erskine a sacrifice of praise, for Duty was doing the will of God. And so it is that "the new song" of the poet is an old song only sung with greater and growing energy, and experience in holiness.

In 1827 writing from Venice he gives hints of his thoughts on Universal Restoration; he hopes the Second Adam will not cease his glorious work till "every vestige of poison has been taken from each individual of the human race". In the same letter he distinguishes between the conscience and the heart. "What is the honest language of your heart? Not of the conscience but the heart?"

From another letter we learn there is only one hope for the world; and therefore all human governments, he wrote, which seek to ameliorate the conditions and circumstances of their various countries "must be bad more or less, until men cease to be bad".

Erskine was sorely distressed, he wrote, because of the tawdry use of the symbols, taken from the Biblical storehouse, at /

at the religious festivals of the Romish church. One of these symbols was the star which led the wise men. "I love the stars. I wish they conducted me to Christ. Sometimes they do. Oh! where is that Eternal fountain of light from which they are filled?"

Wherever Erskine travelled there he sought the fellowship of the faithful and specially enjoyed the sacrament of The Supper which was always a reminder to him of continuous communion with God, who is more than happiness to him ... "I would seek Him!"

As he explores Rome he sees on many a wall, and ruined arch, and broken column the handwriting which Belshazzar saw in Babylon, but yet Rome was to him an image of Eternity, and this thought led him to write "There shall be no more time", for there shall be no longer delay since God's eternal purpose shall be accomplished".

At one time during his Continental tour he is reading Adam's Thoughts, "which reach his heart more than the thoughts of other writers"; at another time he is busy with Doddridge - "his expostulations and entreaties". And from this study he is led to write "The Cross is the King's highway to His Kingdom". All over Europe in 1827 there were convulsions and rumours of further wars, and these led him to wonder at the strange fact that "so little good fruit has been produced by God's revelations to man". The question and problem for the present age is how to bring the conscience of men to listen to the pleadings and call of the Second Conscience - Jesus Christ. At another time Erskine is immersed in Law's "Spirit of Prayer", and of it he says, "It is most mystical and beautiful". The place of intellect in religion was for long a matter of speculation with Erskine, but in the Spiritual Order he does give it a place. Perhaps it was this fact which kept his mysticism so sane and practical.

Erskine's /

Erskine's mind was never far from what he considered the main thing, i.e., the life of God in the soul. At Mola the condition of the people reminds him of the words, "cursed be the ground for their sake". This however does not keep him from recalling "many of the jokes which amused Charles". Ferry Chapel too is on his heart "will you ask Mr. Greig, as a particular favour, that he will conscientiously, as unto the Lord and not unto men, assist my friends in finding some proper person for Ferry Chapel?" At Albano he commends the Romans and also the Greeks for erecting their tombs by the main arteries of traffic and approaches to the towns. Why? Professor Butcher gives the answer: "those who sleep shall one day rise and resume their journey". At Paris we find him at the tomb of one, who in life had few friends, and he adds the quaint yet sympathetic note of ideal friendship in the Christian spirit - "Were I the sole friend of any one, I should consider myself in some sort his monument". Many have written on "Friendship", but few have reached such a height. Again he refers to his reading. We have seen how he praised the "Spirit of Prayer" and for his correspondent's sake he adds another of Law's works, the "Spirit of Love"; and would like to learn the opinion of his cousin in regard to these books".

From Linlathen in 1828 he writes deploring the state of religion in his day.

It is more a matter of forms and words than of life and character, and in the same letter gives one of his illuminating thoughts on Christology. "Christ", he writes, fulfilled the whole law for if he had failed to love one single man out of all in the world He could not have said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father".

The ways of Providence fill his heart with awe and reverence; "how wonderfully God connects man with man"; "He makes /

makes one the channel for bringing to another". "This Order of Providence is called love". "He makes us fellow workers with Himself".

He, in another letter, affirms he lays little stress on intellect; "people quote the examples of Sir Isaac Newton and Blaise Pascal and such great men, as argument in favour of religion, whereas a sanctified idiot like poor Joseph is an argument worth a thousand Newtons."

Evidently Erskine felt the criticism in the letters of his cousin, who was doubtful of some of Erskine's positions and yet the pain because of this lack of sympathy was not so hurtful to Erskine as would be the pain, if he refused to hold the truth as truth appeared to him; still he longs for sympathy. Part of the criticism of Rachel Erskine was that Erskine, a mere layman, should dare to give what he considered a true statement of the atonement which was contrary to the views of the expert. Rachel Erskine was in sympathy with the "Marrow" men, but Erskine affirms though such believe in a Gospel for all they would be the first to cry heretic, if one should call in question the doctrine of Election.

From Cadder in 1828 Erskine writes, "I have Keble lying open before me. The hymns for the holy week are beautiful; Monday is exquisite ... and the theology of the fourth stanza, 'Thou art as much His care', is worth, in my mind, the whole Shorter and Longer Catechism together".

From Edinburgh he writes on one occasion to this effect, "I cannot tell you the delight that I have found in thinking of God's love to Man as a disapproving love". It is so common he thinks for us to confound love with approbation and love with disinterestedness. Love is often given to those who think well of us or, who are necessary to our happiness. It is otherwise with God whose love neither acknowledges nor demands /

demands anything either amiable or serviceable in its objects. "The sanctifying forgiveness of God manifested in Christ is the light of life, and he that seeth it hath life"; "to see the light of forgiveness implies the works of light just as failure to know forgiveness is followed by the works of Darkness". "In the death of Christ the old life was exhausted, and in the resurrection the New Life was infused".

Writing in 1829 he makes a reference to the cost of his beliefs, viz. misunderstanding on the part of his friends, and, friend divided from friend because of adherence to Erskine's outlook on works, and faith, or unlimited forgiveness. And yet no one has a right to believe anything save on the authority of God. Some assert the love of God is for those who believe, repent, amend, but what is our surety that these are real? The forgiveness of God is a reality apart from these things in man. "The belief of this information as written in the death and resurrection of Christ is the faith of the Gospel; and the use of it is that it makes the character of God the ground of confidence. You need not work for pardon any more, for I have pardoned you: now you may work for God".

In 1830 he makes reference to the case of McLeod Campbell and deplores the fact, that having set aside the general charges of the libel, the Assembly fixed on one point, "the love of God in Christ for every man" as the supreme indictment against McLeod Campbell and put on record the abhorrence and detestation of the Assembly that any one should hold "that the agony of Christ expressed the measure of the love of God and that no man could act as a peacemaker between God and man, who could not tell man that God had made peace with him".

In 1833 he makes known his change of mind in regard to a matter which had raised many controversies in the religious life of Scotland, viz. "the gift of tongues". Erskine at first /

first had been inclined to believe in, not only the sanity but also the sincerity of those, who were said to be so gifted, till, he detected in the tongues the echoes of some of the facts which he had read in the public prints and therefore Erskine put the matter to one of the chief actors in the drama who acknowledged that the criticism of Erskine was correct.

Though Erskine changed his mind in regard to the special manifestation of the gift of tongues in the West of Scotland he by no means resiled from the position, which he then held "as to what the endowment of the Church is, if she had faith, but it changes me as to the present estimate that I form of her condition".

Erskine held that the church had in her possession the gift of tongues which gift, however, could only be exercised by a living, energising and spiritually advanced church. That condition was not then the position of the church as Erskine fondly cherished. Somehow one feels Erskine is, if anything, a little contradictory in this matter, for he regarded the gift of tongues without the power to interpret not as an exalted one by any means and hence there arises in the mind of the critic, the question what function was fulfilled in the Church by these gifts? Are these not the marks of a time in the life of the church past and gone?

Erskine's grasp of principles and his sanity kept him apart from the extravagancies of Irving and the Church of the Irvingites.

In one letter dated 1834 he returns to a theme which finds an important place in "The Brazen Serpent". It is the wilderness march of the children of Israel, in which the people were consumed and wasted, yet behind all the seeming wastage there was a hidden love which invited "poor weak worms of the dust to take hold of the will of God, and to make /



make it their own will and thus be united to Omnipotence". As Erskine considered the claims of the Irvingites he was satisfied that many were resting solely on the ordinances without personally meeting God in the ordinance; but the critical point for Erskine was the claim, he affirms, which Irving made because it was in the handwriting of Irving. What was the claim? That submission required to be made "to him as the ordinance of God".

One of the leaders of the Irvingites was in Scotland about this period for the purpose of furthering the interests of the new church; but to Erskine such missionary zeal was of no avail in view of the fact (1). that Drummond held all those positions which Erskine, as we have seen, bewailed and condemned; that is to say, these men along with Drummond regarded themselves as deputies from God and not as organs through which they themselves heard God. McLeod Campbell who furnished Erskine with this information, when he had urged on these deputies "the necessity of the personal hearing the voice of God, for sanctioning everything from God" received the reply from Drummond, who said, "he considered it a figure of speech to talk of the voice of God within". And from a letter received by Erskine from Drummond, Erskine regards as a true inference from that letter that "he (Drummond) seems to me to have no conception of the Spirit of the living God being really with every man as his guide and teacher, and thus he is necessarily thrown upon outside things for want of better".

Erskine was the friend of children; on one occasion he remarked after the responsive look of a child that he and the child shared something in common. He trusted children; to the dying boy, interested in Erskine's pocket Testament, the book, though a present from a friend, was given and when Miss Duncan was about to mark a passage, which had helped the sufferer, /

sufferer, she was hindered from doing so with the words, the book was left for his lifetime, and he had no right to mark it. The lad lived in a hovel but his spirit was unsoiled and the Testament after his death was returned to Erskine just as the book had been given.

In a letter of the year 1836 Erskine writes, "There is nothing so like our relation to God as our relation to a mother" and adds, "I feel an increasing value for their loves and friendships, (his mother and cousin Mamie at Airth) which I never earned, but which were given me at birth. I remember when the self-conceit of my heart used to make a different estimate, but I have fully come back to the unearned system".

When Erskine passed through times of sorrow his faith shone more clearly; "how many know what they read but do not get comfort. Oh! the boasted intellect has little to do with God and comfort".

Not the least interesting part of Erskine's experience was the time he spent with Dr. Chalmers in Paris.

Chalmers was not a satisfactory disciple of Erskine for writing in one of the last of the letters to his cousin he says, "I had a letter from Dr. Chalmers ... proving to me that he had completely misunderstood my book which I have already written."

Erskine in the same letter shows he is a student of history. There is the aftermath of the French Revolution, which, Erskine thought was not carried through in the spirit of brotherhood, but in the folly of force, "be our brothers or die".

Two other correspondents, both foreign ladies, find a place in Erskine's list and the letters of Erskine to the Duchess de Broglie and Madame Vernet are not without interest. Madame de Broglie had her own thoughts in regard to the positions Erskine held, and advocated in season and out of season. Evidently /

Evidently there were differences of outlook in regard to the question of emphasis to be put on either Sovereignty or Fatherhood. Erskine is all for a warmth of religious life; "The deepest thing in religion is our conscious meeting with God in the secret of our own hearts - we may hear and know it from all other voices within and without us ... and our fault seems to me always to be the consequence of our not listening, which demands patience and waiting". To Erskine there are two Counsellors calling to the hearts of men, the voice of the spirit in conscience, and the voice of evil which calls to self-indulgence whereas the voice of the Spirit calls for self-effacement and self-judgment; and clinching his argument Erskine asserts "in every action of my outward or inward man God sets before me the choice of right and wrong, of His will and my own selfish will, and my action contains my answer to God's Counsel".

Erskine turns to some account the Natural Law in the Spiritual world; before the well supplies water at the pump a vacuum must be created, so "the man who will cease from his own wisdom is he who draws up God's counsels from the great deep".

The question of the subjective and objective in religion had been a matter of difference but Erskine cannot think he and his correspondent essentially differ. "Confidence in God does not give me confidence in Him, but confidence rests 'on what I know of the character of God', but my confidence, inasmuch as it binds me to a righteous God, is itself a righteous thing. The only righteousness of man is to receive a righteous leader, a righteous confidence, a true guide". "Man is merely a receiver. If the consciousness of righteousness is inconsistent with humility, man must remain in a false position through Eternity".

The letter which Erskine wrote to Madame de Broglie from /

from St. Germain in 1838 is a production of uncommon interest to all who are in search of Erskine's attitude to the position in the Christian religion on the one hand, and to that, which is principle, on the other. It has been often said Erskine in his thoughts and writings is more subjective than objective. In his reading of the four Gospels and the Epistles Erskine affirms he perceives differences. The Gospel of John differs from the three other Gospels, and the various Epistles differ from one another; so much as that Erskine is tempted to think that one class is intended for one age, and others for another. He does not lose, he says, the position by identifying it with principle and that which is a matter of general consciousness. The personal character and relation of Christ is not lost to Erskine, when he identifies Him with conscience, and relation is intensified and increased.

"If the Bible is given to us for our instruction in righteousness then it must address our moral conscience as otherwise it could not be for our instruction in righteousness".

Erskine then proceeds, it would seem, to satisfy his correspondent in regard to things wherein they agree and to endeavour to convince concerning the things in which they seem to differ.

- (a) Man can do no good thing of himself.
- (b) And yet the Spirit of God is always present to him, that he may take hold of that strength, if he will.
- (c) The first step is taken by God towards man.
- (d) Man may and does accept or refuse according to something in himself - a personal choice is the essence of human nature.

These descriptions of Erskine's views were called forth by reading a work of the Duke de Broglie. This work was pleasing to him because of the emphasis laid on the inward test /

test of truth, moral and intellectual, the intuitive perception of truth, the glance that one sometimes gets into the truth of a fact or a principle, which is followed by endless darkness and yet remains as a counterpoise against all the darkness, although it is only a memory.

Sorrow had come into the experience of Madame de Broglie, for a few weeks afterwards he writes, "accept your punishment, not the punishment of a Judge, but the chastisement of a most tender Father. Let us enter into His plan".

In his last letter to Madame de Broglie Erskine tells how he is often discouraged by criticism, which arises because those who read his books receive evidently a false impression, through the imperfect manner in which he has stated his thoughts. One of those false impressions had been conveyed to them by Madame de Broglie who had regarded a certain statement of Erskine as if he meant to imply what conscience might do for man apart from the Bible. This was far from his purpose, which really was to say that "all that a man learns from the Bible without awakening a living consciousness of its truth might as well not be learned". In other words, Erskine was emphasising the fact that there was a correspondence between the truths of the Bible and the spiritual part of a man's nature just as there is a correspondence between the outward relations of life and the feelings of a man's heart - i.e., parent and child, husband and wife. To believe a doctrine of the Bible or have faith because one believes the Bible is a position against which it is necessary to guard. The deeper the spiritual discernment so is the profit from the doctrine, for there are different degrees of depth in the same truth. Further, God manifest in the flesh is not only the revelation of the history of Jesus, but also the revelation of God in His relation to the understanding, feelings and nature of man in general. Jesus Christ was God and /

and man to show that God could be apprehended by man; that the faculties of man can be fit recipients of God. Erskine cannot conceive a man having a Bible and yet putting it away since conscience is sufficient. Erskine does not oppose the conscience to the Bible; the Bible is to conscience what the telescope is to the eye. The telescope brings more objects within the range of vision, so does the Bible for conscience.

"God has left no man without the means of salvation"; without the Bible a man has some knowledge of God with whom he can be acquainted by his conscience, and salvation means a growing acquaintance with God and a closer conformity to His will.

Writing to Madame Vernet in 1828 Erskine affirms that the hour of sorrow is often the time men apprehend the supernatural power of the Gospel, at least it was so in his own experience. This is the substantial reality - "God loves me". Again in the same connection he says, "God gives but man often loses the benefit of the gift by not knowing how to use it; not that we should have thoughts on holiness but that we should be holy."

Added to these letters, Erskine wrote several letters to Lord Rutherford of the College of Justice who, though an agnostic, was to Erskine a friend dearly beloved. These letters are full of wisdom and instruction. Religion is not obtruded or forced on his correspondent and yet religious beliefs are not hidden. There is indeed a holy ingenuity on the part of Erskine to redeem the time; he gives a call to look at life (V. 2: 64) "Before and after". "My friend", he writes, "we are but cisterns and we need a fountain". (V. 1: 344). "The creature", says Erskine in another letter, "is essentially insufficient for itself, and this so far from being a misery, is intended to conduct us to our greatest happiness /

happiness - the filial relation to our creator". I cannot tell you how I love you, Rutherford, and how much I have prized your steady kindness and friendship. I think I could die to turn you to God your true soul and body". (V. 2: 65). "Let us look backward and forward together on the great ocean behind us and before us". (V. 2: 79). "And what is eternal life but the righteous unshifting will of God in opposition to all selfish wills".

The same characteristics, as have been noted in the letters under review, find expression in the many letters he sent to others. To Carlyle he writes not criticising his work but giving words of encouragement and cheer. We have already mentioned the letter on The Lord's Prayer and to this letter there may be added the other letters in which the Chelsea Sage shows such a kindly interest in Betty, the aged nurse of his dead wife.

In Erskine's communications to Bishop Colenso in regard to the latter's position to Biblical criticism, Erskine shows the new study is not for him, though he sees it must come, and thinks it will be for the advancement of truth, but he asks, is it wise to express these views just yet?

When he breaks a lance with Dr. Gloag, it is the forensic aspect of the atonement which calls forth Erskine's efforts and the letters to Professor Lorimer prove that Erskine held tentatively many of the conclusions which modern criticism has reached.

The value of these Letters of Erskine is very great; no better text-book on Pastoral Theology is to be found. The letter Erskine wrote as an heritor of Main's Parish Church might be fittingly read at every ordination and induction in the Protestant Church.

In Erskine's letters to his cousin Rachel Erskine, we find the writer recommending at one time Law's "Spirit of Prayer" /

Prayer" and "Spirit of Love". Associated with the name of Law is that of Jacob Böhme whose words, "The element of the bird is the air, the element of the fish is the water, the element of the salamander is the fire, and the heart of God is Jacob Böhme's element", according to Principle Shairp were often quoted by Erskine.

In the letter where he praised Law's two books we read ... "Law in his latter days took to reading the works of Jacob Böhme, a German Divine, and from him learned much. I should like to read him too, but I must relearn German in order to fit myself for it". Now what influence had Law on the mind of Erskine? Many of Erskine's positions were those held by Law and before Law, Böhme, who in turn was acquainted with the older Protestant mystics. These mystics had revolted against forensic doctrines of the Atonement. "It is a noteworthy error of false Christians", says Valentine Weysil, "that they leave another to obey the law, to suffer, and to die; while they desire without repentance to avail themselves of imputed righteousness. Nay truly, thou canst have no help from outside. That must come from the Christ within thee, not from one who is outside. True faith is the life of Christ in us; it is being baptized with Him. Christ's death and merits are imputed to no one, unless he have Christ's death in himself, and unless he rise with Him to a new life".

Part of Böhme's beliefs "derived", says Dean Inge, "we know not whence, but presumably from the school of Eckhart", asserted ... "The Son is the Eternal Good, which the Father discovers and gives birth to within Himself. The son is the reality, the actualisation of the Divine Nature. The office of the Holy Spirit, within the bosom of the Godhead, is as a bond between the Father and Son, and the expression of their joint life". (Studies in English Mystics, page 141).

The parts of Böhme which attracted him (Law) most were the /



the polemic against forensic doctrines of the Atonement; the perpetual insistence that God is love, and that wrath is foreign to His nature, the doctrine of 'unio mystica' brought him, as with Paul, into closest connection with Christology; and the analogy between the visible and invisible world, the sacramental view of life. These doctrines were not borrowed from Böhme. Law believed them before. But in the Teutonic philosopher he found for the first time an illuminating exposition of his own deepest convictions; and the result was a new note in his teaching, a note of ardent and rapturous emotion, which blends in the most striking manner with the old austerity and moralism". (Inge, 145).

Can we say the same of Erskine? Or is there need to affirm anything at all? The date of Erskine's letters in which he calls attention to the two works of Law is 1838. Presumably this was his first acquaintance with the "Spirit of Prayer" and "The Spirit of Love". Now before this date Erskine had written and published his books. It is to the Brazen Serpent the thoughts turn to find whether any of the influence of Law is discernible, but though Law's Serious Call was known to Erskine it is only in a letter on Plymouthism, dated 1840 to Mrs. Burnett that we have a defence of something which Law had asserted - extracts of which had been sent to Erskine by his correspondent. Is the conclusion not this, that as Law in regard to Böhme saw his thoughts in the words of the German writer, so Erskine owed little to Law in turn, save that through the study of the books mentioned he was the more confirmed and established in those beliefs which had already found expression in Erskine's published writings?

## CHAPTER II.

(1) We have seen that in the "Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion", (1820), Erskine affirmed that he perceived in the moral and spiritual constitution of man an Internal Evidence for religion which, for the time being, he seemed to have lost. This Internal Evidence rested on facts - the fact of conscience and faith, for which the message of the Gospel had a special adaptation in the satisfaction of conscience and faith. Out of this adaptation there came light, which made plain the message of the Gospel and the system of theology. The plan of salvation was worthy, therefore, of God and belief in the free forgiveness of God was the one source and dynamic from, and by which, man could reach the possession of a holy character.

(2) In an Essay on Faith (1822) - Erskine's next work - he asked the question, How can belief in a fact commend men to God, or raise the moral and spiritual tone of any individual? There is, says Erskine, a close relationship between belief and character. Moral truth is only real to one whose moral nature is healthy, or being healed, or restored to spiritual health. Men were taught to believe and yet only certain elect persons could benefit by the belief. What must I believe and how can I believe God loves me, if He only loves me after I have so believed? To this question the answer is given - all are pardoned - yes, even though men believe it or not. To those who believe this message there was the gift of sanctification and salvation; those who neglected the message were condemned, but note, not as sinners, only as unconverted persons. It might be said therefore according to Erskine that faith justified because it has power to sanctify. God's justice must be satisfied, since, by the sin of man justice has been outraged. Hence substitution comes into the scheme of salvation, but with substitution Erskine found the potency, and the proof of Christianity in the /

the character of God, and in that of man. Man's religious experience is the greatest proof of Christianity. Christian character is the outward witness to the inner experience of the soul.

(3) In the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, <sup>(1)</sup> (1828), the third book from his pen, Erskine is still a believer in the orthodox doctrine of Substitution. It is only through dependence on God, which has been destroyed by sin, that men obtain salvation. Grace is the restoring element. It is the love of God, and not the desire for happiness, which saves men. The Gospel calls for a denial of self, and for the restoration of Divine Love to the supreme place in the heart of man. Men are said to be justified by faith because faith grants to every man the sense of pardon, "which is laid at every door", and thus in Erskine's estimation the Gospel is unconditionally free. Salvation, he says, is quite distinct from pardon or forgiveness for salvation is the development or sanctification of the heart which is obedient not once but always to the call of the Divine Spirit.

(4) In The Brazen Serpent (1831), we find substitution in the Atonement is set aside. There is nothing in the nature of penalty in redemption, but forgiveness is certain just from the fact that God is love. Men are involved in the Sin of Adam, but there is no personal guilt in such an inheritance. Christ as Head of the guilty nature, though sinless, is involved in man's condemnation, and through the sinless death of Christ, suffering in character was changed from unsanctifying to sanctifying. The Head of humanity made it seemly for God to pardon and restore mankind, - not the restoration of an election - or elect number, - but final and universal restoration.

(5) /

(1) App. 13, 14, 15, 11.

(5) Erskine, in his Doctrine of Election, (1837) showed even more clearly how far he had moved from the prevailing and popular ideas - of his day. To him the popular form of Election was not according to the spirit and character of God. It was a contradiction of the Divine Nature - Love. There are two wills, he affirmed, calling the heart of man to a certain line of conduct. There is the voice of God revealed in conscience, illumined by the spirit, and there is the drawing of evil which ever seeks to convince men that self-will, and not the will of God is the better. Man standing between these two wills, or subject to their drawings, can choose for himself - the will to which he shall give allegiance. Man, therefore, has freedom of choice. There is election, says Erskine, to gifts or talents, but no election unto life. Faced with our Lord's words in regard to Eternal Punishment Erskine showed that the term *aionios* <sup>(1)</sup> does not relate to endless time. Erskine believed in Calvinism, inasmuch as the Calvinistic doctrine affirmed man's inability to start to walk in righteous ways. Salvation is only possible to man since Christ "has come into the whole mass of man's nature, as a fountain of life, to quicken every man, and as a living cord to draw him up to God". Salvation comes by hearing and obeying conscience. God does not bestow absolutely the gift of salvation, but only drawings towards life. Justification puts a man into right relations with God.

Erskine did not write a special treatise to set forth the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood, and yet, the principle implied in the Fatherhood of God lies at the basis of all that he has written. The truth is in the Internal Evidence ... "For man free forgiveness on the part of God is the only effective dynamic by which character is developed and attained, and /

(1) App. 32.

and the true setting of Christian doctrines is "the love of God through the Eternal Son". The same declaration of the Fatherly heart of God is asserted in The Essay on Faith, where sovereignty gives place to Divine love, an Evangel expressed "in the language of the heart".

The Unconditional Freeness rests on the doctrine of the Fatherhood. The love to man on the part of God is "the keystone of the bridge". The Divine Fatherhood is pre-eminently apparent in The Brazen Serpent ... "Christ came in order to destroy the calumny of the Evil One, who said God did not love man". The doctrine of Fatherly love lies at the back of all Erskine's contentions against Calvinism, for it was out of the depths of his own consciousness, Erskine found facts which helped him to understand God was not an hard Judge, as Calvinism represented ... "since the Bible does not make a Saviour for man, but affirms man has a Saviour and a Father". And in The Spiritual Order he asserts "we are entirely dependent on God the Father".

What Erskine understood by the Fatherhood of God <sup>(1)</sup> is expressed very strikingly in a letter addressed to Mrs. Schwabe, a follower of Martineau, (page 118, Vol. 2, Letters of Erskine; Edinburgh; Douglas & Foulis), (Hanna) "I have felt along with him (Martineau) what a hopeless desolate state men would be in were they necessitated to scream out their wants, and sorrows to a being separated from them by an impassable gulf; and I have also felt what a deadly chill it throws over the universe to substitute eternal laws for an infinite Father."

I have indeed found that the only deliverance for man lies in the living union of God with humanity, and not an historical matter, but an eternal spiritual order. The fact of conscience is the great spiritual fact in man's nature. Well, /

(1)

App. 10.

Well, what is conscience? Is it merely part and parcel of myself? Christianity says that it is the presence of God's light and love and life met by a spiritual capacity in us of apprehending it; and it is there, not as a spy, or as a taskmaster, but as a loving guide, and helper, and comforter - that it is the divine spirit of sonship, to assure us of the unchangeable fatherliness of God's purpose towards us, and to accomplish that purpose in all who yield themselves to it, making them indeed sons of God. This presence dwells in each of us, connecting us with each other, and connecting all with God ... the divine element issuing out of God into us all, not direct from the great Father, but modified by passing through a human heart ... that human heart is the heart of Jesus, the head and root of the race, our elder brother; he has passed through human life and human death bearing all our burdens - the burden of our sins and the burden of our sorrows - the true Saviour, the true King, connected with every individual of the race, not only by a bond of love, but a bond of relation of brotherhood, a bond which can never be broken".

The Fatherhood of God, to Erskine, also implied a suffering God, whose righteousness is love crowned by sacrifice. To Erskine there was sternness, and compassion in the Fatherhood of God. And to him also the idea of God as a servant was not incompatible with the character of a father. Erskine laid down the basis of the Fatherhood of God as he found it revealed in the Word.

Such was the nature of the seed which Erskine sowed in the soil of Religious Thought in Scotland. The effect was not revolutionary, save in the manner of the reception given to this fresh and original presentation of truth. Much invective was spent in denunciation of Erskine's efforts to rekindle the dying embers. <sup>(1)</sup> To many Erskine was a rank heretic, /

(1) App. 12.

heretic, an iconoclast and a dangerous person. It evidently escaped these critics that Erskine's purpose was a sincere desire to remove the difficulties of religion and spread the Evangel of the Kingdom of God. Erskine did not pull down for the pleasure of doing so; on the contrary he writes in a letter to Lord Rutherford (page 74, Vol. 2) that his aim was reconstruction, a purpose altogether wanting, says Erskine, in a Voltaire devoid of reverence and therefore unlike Socrates, "who ... has such a deep and true veneration for everything that is really right in principle, he feels that without it man and the universe are nothing more than a dust-storm". To Erskine this blind opposition and treatment was singularly hard to face and endure, for Erskine in character was better than the beliefs he propounded; and yet he faced this ostracism with a clear conscience and child-like character.

Dr. Chalmers, then a force in the religious life of Scotland, was interested in Erskine's first book on the Internal Evidence, but suspicious of the fact that Erskine gave to reason the place it filled in this new apologetic for Christianity. In regard to the Unconditional Freeness, Chalmers expressed his mind in laudatory terms, though he saw very clearly that Erskine's principle of The Divine Fatherhood was likely to lead to the acceptance, or declaration of Universal Salvation or Restoration.

Thomson, <sup>(1)</sup> then of St. George's, Edinburgh, was violently opposed to Erskine's views and in a course of lectures denounced these presentations of truth. Did Erskine make converts to his beliefs? Were there any who became his followers? This at least can be affirmed from the issue of The Internal Evidence down to the present, the ideas and thoughts of Erskine have found a place in the religious thought /

(1) App. 4.



thought of Scotland. These thoughts and ideas of Erskine's were imperfect in many things, or aspects; they were tentative, but they raised issues, started new lines of thought, compelled men to revise their notions, and pointed out other roads by which man might approach the temple of truth.

Erskine was a pioneer and a blazer of trails. But what of converts and followers? When Erskine died the populace was not stirred, for his influence had not been in the midst of the loud stunning tide of human affairs, but as a writer in the Scotsman of 31st. March, 1870, said "his power was deep and still". Men of the younger generation had been captured by him, not in battalions, but here and there a youthful heart, moved with the venture of faith in search of truth, but also men destined to be in letters and thought leaders of their fellows.

To the searcher for truth Erskine opened up new fields and regions of thought. A new Psychology was adumbrated in The Internal Evidence, and in the discussion of Faith, Erskine revealed himself as a worthy leader in the survey of the contents of Christian consciousness; whilst in the Unconditional Freeness, the devoted preacher of the Gospel had a new force put within his reach, since he was not placed in the invidious position of "a marrow man", who presented the water of life only to withdraw the same from him who stooped to drink, for Erskine believed that was the effect of the words "out of his mere good pleasure".

In The Brazen Serpent with its many weaknesses, the student of the word is conscious that in fellowship with Erskine he is dwelling, not with a saint only, but also with one whose thoughts, and the expression of these thoughts, were marked by spiritual genius. In his book, The Doctrine of Election, <sup>(1)</sup> Erskine helped to bring in the light, which has /

(1) App. 5.

has done much to lift the mists that gathered round the Divine Being. The Fatherhood of God, based on love and not on sovereignty alone adds a width to man's conception of God and gives also a wider synthesis of the Gospel message. Calvinism is said to put iron into a man, yet the declaration of the free love of God is a still mightier force; and minds for higher issues made were not slow to put into practice and use the thoughts of the pioneer - Erskine of Linlathen.

If we follow the streams of Religious Thought in Scotland we shall find in all the churches men who found in the work of Erskine inspiration and help. A writer and friend, who could inspire a Maurice and a Stanley, who could hold fellowship with such Continental leaders as Adolphe Monod and Vinet, was not without a similar power and influence in Scotland, notwithstanding the truism in regard to a prophet in his own country and among his own kin. The friends and fellow-labourers of Erskine were such men as McLeod Campbell, Robert Story of Roseneath, Principal Caird, Dr. Norman MacLeod, and of a later generation, Principals Tulloch, Story and Shairp. In the Secession stream of thought we find the names of Gilfillan, Robertson, Balmer, Ferguson, Macrae, and also men of the type of John Brown, the author of "Rab and His Friends"; and in the Church of the Disruption, Dr. Hanna, and Walter C. Smith; and behind such names a number of thoughtful men who, in all the churches, had made it possible for Dr. W.C. Smith, a persona grata in all the Churches, when he was Moderator of the Free Church in the Jubilee year of that Church - May, 1893 ... to say, "For it were idle to shut our eyes to the fact that a change has been going on in the drift of religious thought, and also in some of the habits of religious life, during the last half century, and that not only in the Free Church, but in all the churches in the land. Assuredly we still, one and all of us, cleave to the old Evangelical /

Evangelical Faith, with its supreme doctrine of grace, which was stamped into the Scottish character, I trust indelibly and for ever, by a manifold experience of the strength, and hope, and comfort which it brought us in many a dark day of trial. Yet, while that is still the faith by which we live, it cannot be denied that the form in which it is now commonly presented is somewhat different from what it was, even in the youth of many of us. I do not say there is anything absolutely new in it, anything which was not there from the beginning. The materials are the same, only they are somewhat differently arranged. Thus the Divine Sovereignty now is commonly based on the Divine Fatherhood, as all primitive sovereignty was, and the absolute will gives place to the infinite love of God. This is the view we would naturally receive from the character and teaching of Christ, and it is the personal, historic Christ, as He is revealed in the Gospels, that dominates our thoughts to-day, rather than the dogmatic Christianity which is discussed in the Epistles. More and more the tendency is to take the great formative ideas of theology directly from Jesus, and to subordinate the words of the Apostles to those of the Master whom they served, and whom they exalted as "all in all". These words of Dr. Smith show that the evolution of religious thought in which Erskine was a noted pioneer had moved in one respect to firmer and surer ground.

### CHAPTER III.

Unhappily for theology in Erskine's early days, men were turning their minds to other things, and energy was wasted in disputes in regard to matters which did not concern the vital things, that held the mind and heart of Erskine. There were, however, little groups, here and there, made up of men and women, tired of the rigours of Calvinism, and wearied with the futilities of Burgher; and anti-Burgher, these formed praying circles, afterwards organised into congregations. (1) The leaders in this movement which found recruits mostly in the North of Scotland, were the brothers Robert Haldane of Airthrey and James Alexander Haldane. The evangelical zeal of those, who largely augmented the Congregational Church of Scotland, was in striking contrast to that of both the Church of Scotland and the Secession Church. The Church of Scotland was moderate in her evangel and the Secession Church eclectic and also torn and rent by disputes, in these later days, puerile in comparison with the commission of the great Head of the Church. What was common in the churches of the Secession became the experience of the Congregational Churches; there were divisions. One section came to favour the tenets of the Baptists to whom the Haldanes gave their support, - the other section under the leadership of Ralph Wardlaw continued to abide by the original and common standard of the Congregational form of Church polity. Baptism, however, was not the only source of cleavage, since manifestly there was a growing tendency to take a wider outlook than that of Calvinism. This was apparent in the attack which J.A. Haldane, in his doctrine of the Atonement, makes on the position of Wardlaw one of the leading men in the Congregational Church in regard to the same topic. Wardlaw divides into three classes the theories of the atonement. (1) "The theory of exact Equivalent", which represents "the expiatory sufferings of the Redeemer as possessing first as /

(1) App. 27.

as much atoning virtue, neither less nor more, as was equivalent for the merited punishment of all who shall be benefited by it". This theory, Haldane says, Wardlaw firstly rejects as derogatory to the dignity of the mediatorial substitute, but there was evidently in the mind of Haldane a suspicion of something more behind Wardlaw's words than those expressed, for, Haldane carefully underlines the term expiated when he writes "that if the sufferings of Christ were expiatory, they must have expiated the guilt of those whose substitute He became"; on Wardlaw's descriptions of a second theory of the atonement as held by some, viz., "infinite sufficiency but definite intention or limited destruction", Haldane makes no remark. It is his own position. The third theory to which Wardlaw subscribes is that of "indefinite or universal Atonement, with gracious sovereignty in its effectual application". To this theory Haldane gives no place, for it is "a question upon which the scriptures never enter". Moreover Haldane appears to think Wardlaw passed over the "mystery" of the Atonement; he grants, however, that Dr Wardlaw holds the doctrine of justification by faith "but he razes its foundations". Proceeding Haldane quotes Wardlaw's words "the end or design, for which Christ died - for which he offered up the sacrifice of himself, was to put away sin". This, Haldane says, just means the Atonement "was as much offered for fallen angels, or for the 'thousand rebel workers' as for the elect of God, although its application was limited to them. It opened a door for all sinful creatures, while salvation was confined to a part of the race of Adam". All this according to the critic is opposed to the word of God.

From what has been said of this controversy, it is apparent there was a widening process at work in the doctrines held by the Congregational Church, at least, that part of /

of the Church under the leadership of Dr. Wardlaw who, by the way, was born within the ranks of the Secession Church. Can we account for the growth in doctrine? If we turn to the biography of Dr. Wardlaw by Dr. Lindsay Alexander, we shall get some light thrown on the subject. Dr. Wardlaw, writing to his friend Dr. Wood page 275 says, "You ask my judgment of Mr. Erskine's last little work (The Unconditional Freeness). I cannot, of course, enter into the topics of which it treats. All I can say is, that I have seldom, if ever, perused a book with more mingled feelings, of approbation and disapprobation, delight and sorrow. I love the man. Every one that knows him must love him. I looked upon his works on account of their coming from an educated and accomplished layman, and of the style in which they were written, in which there is so much taste and elegance of mind, as eminently fitted to do good in a particular circle of society. I was therefore grieved there should be any statements in that little publication and on such a subject, such as I could not approve, and such as might lead the careless to say, from the new nomenclature which, in regard to particular terms, he introduces, and from after circumstances - "There is no fixing this Bible of yours to any definite meaning; every pretender to original thinking finds something new in it, and explains it differently from his predecessors". "You will see that I refer especially to his views of pardon and colateral topics, with which I cannot agree, and which I think confused and hardly consistent with themselves. But then there is so much that is excellent; many of his illustrations are so exquisitely fine; and there is such a tone of humble, tender, delightful feeling, as well as of pure, and free and sublime devotion runs through it - something in all his exhibitions of the Divine Being that makes you feel at the same moment your immeasurable distance and your gracious /

gracious nearness, filling the soul at once with humble, solemn awe, and with filial delight and joy and melting affection - that one rarely knows how to find fault. He was a hearer of mine one day some little time - perhaps six weeks ago - and he came into the vestry and walked part of the way home with me. But we could only break ground on the subject and leave it. He was then unshaken in his sentiments. I believe he is enlarging for next edition".

What were Dr. Wardlaw's views of the Atonement? It is in principle "a vindictory manifestation of the righteousness of God, in order to the free and honourable exercise of his mercy". He, however, as we have seen, regrets the view of those who place the essence of the atonement, as an exact equivalent in punishment for the views of the elect so that Christ suffered neither more nor less than the elect deserved; further Wardlaw says its sufficiency as an atonement is universal - but its efficiency is limited by the purpose of God towards the elect. This scheme of atonement serves a double purpose: (1) it concerns the rights of God as the moral governor of the world, and (2) on the other his position as a sovereign benefactor. And Wardlaw in answering Erskine carries war into the camp of his opponent for he claims to vindicate the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel without the hypothesis of universal pardon or faulty exegesis.

Wardlaw was evidently a man under the influence of Erskine, between whom and "The Marrow" men he stands. He has a consciousness of defects in Calvinism and in the Marrow, but the logic of both is the same, and from it he cannot break away to take his stand by Erskine, whose logic is that of the heart.

Personal assurance of salvation was another topic which agitated the minds of men about this time. To this Wardlaw also refers and points out a relationship between Erskine's views /



views and those in regard to personal assurance. That relationship is seen in this, that man's justification is not continued by his believing since justification is itself a fact to be believed - for it exists whether we believe it or not, and is outwith ourselves just as the resurrection of Jesus is. Wardlaw here shows that Erskine and the followers of Barclay are therefore at one since we are not called on to believe in order to be justified, but only to believe we are justified and pardoned - the difference only being - the one believes in ... Election, Erskine in Universalism. From what has been said in regard to Dr. Wardlaw and Mr. J.A. Haldane it is manifest that Erskine's beliefs were widely discussed; sides taken and from the Christian Instructor's point of view, not a little heat engendered and fire struck. The views of Erskine in those early days (1829), provoked thought, called on thinkers to revise traditional views, met orthodoxy with original and new aspects of religious truth. The result was that certain forms of religious thought were softened, enlarged, and so developed that even the most orthodox felt the influence of Erskine's writings. It is a strange feature of those days that the value of an individual's thoughts on religion were supposed neither to be hindered nor helped by character. Erskine insisted on a direct relation between being and character, and as we have seen from Dr. Wardlaw's letter, Erskine's belief found expression in character, which touched the hearts of men as truly in 1829 as in 1870. It is the separation of beliefs and character which makes the Assembly's treatment of McLeod Campbell so notorious. (1) There was manifestly impatience with any such combination of character and belief. The same strikes the reader of the Christian Instructor. Belief was everything and the spirit of intolerance and rancour which supported the belief as a matter of course or of no concern.

From /

(1) App. 17a.

From the first Erskine was of a different spirit both in public and private as can be seen in one of his letters to Gaussen when Erskine reproached himself for neglecting, during a theological and private discussion, the love that never faileth.

We know Erskine was associated with one of those congregations, or groups, born of discontent because of the apathy of the Church of Scotland to evangelic truth, from the fact that, at the time of the McLeod Campbell decision, Erskine was refused the privilege of the sacrament in the Congregational Church in Dundee. That action precipitated a movement among those groups - one conservative section was afraid to go as far as Erskine, whereas another section, which became articulate in 1843 in the Evangelical Union, was in sympathy with his aims, and views. This section of the Congregational Church found allies in those who for many years were called Morisonians.

It was in 1816, in an anti-Burgher manse, that the founder of Morisonianism first saw the light. And it was as a minister of the United Secession that he was ordained in Clerk's Lane, Kilmarnock, three years before the Disruption, 1843. When barely licensed as a preacher, he revolted against the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession; he maintained that salvation was for all, and not merely the elect. It is hard for us to understand how, on the publication of the pamphlet "What must I do to be saved", in which Morisonian doctrine was expounded, there should blaze forth such fierce wrath in the Secession Church around the author of the pamphlet. Morison and three of his brethren were expelled by the Synod, and on the 16th. of May, 1843, the Evangelical Union was formed.

The surprise is that Morison was deposed, when we read the qualification he appended to the freeness of the Gospel and /

and to the denial of election, the qualification that on some people a special influence was bestowed disposing them to accept the free salvation.

Principal Cairns, in his Memoir of John Brown, D.D., <sup>(1)</sup> page 214, shows how it might have been possible for the Synod to have refrained from the sentence of deposition on Mr. Morison. Had he maintained that the atonement of Christ was universal whilst at the same time holding, as he did, that there was a special purpose in saving the elect only, no controversy would have arisen. In other words, had Mr. Morison kept to "The marrow" aspect of religious truth all would have been well; but he held that the object of saving faith so far as the individual is concerned was that Christ made atonement for that person as surely as He made atonement for the sins of the whole world; and to see this fact to be true was salvation by faith, which gives also assurance of salvation. This attitude of mind towards the atonement was condemned by the Synod, because, first, it restricted the boundaries of faith, excluded confidence, took for granted the safety of the individual, and all this was based on the unscriptural theory of universal pardon. There were several counts or charges against Mr. Morison, but for our purpose the following may be noted: "Justification was not pardon, but it was implied in pardon: that God pardoned only in His character of a Father, justified only in His character as a Judge; that Election came in the order of nature after the atonement; and that he was not prepared to say that all men by nature are deserving of the punishment of death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal on account of Adam's first sin".

The discussion of these doctrines within the Secession Church was carried on in Sessions, Congregations, <sup>(2)</sup> Presbyteries and Halls of Divinity, for there were progressives in each of these bodies who kept alive the flame kindled by Erskine. The new outlook and vision was especially welcome

(1) App. 28.      (2) App. 8; p. 66.

welcome to those who were preparing for the Christian Ministry.

In the Autobiography of a Metaphysician, (Skinner, Elliot, Edinburgh, 1893), there is an account given of the manner in which the Secession Presbytery of Perth (1847) received a discourse prepared by one of the students within the bounds of the Presbytery. <sup>(1)</sup> The writer says "With few exceptions the members on the ministerial side were men of the oldest Calvinistic views and, in my discourse before the Presbytery, I held that God imputed to His (Adam's) descendants Adam's sin, because He holds men to the consequences of Adam's sins. He does so since He allows, by the operation of natural causes, Adam's depravity to taint their moral nature. Depravity was inherited from Adam, either by a special act of God, or because of the natural working of second causes. If the first, the idea is too horrible to be entertained, we are entitled to hold the second. So I held that the reason why God accounted or reckoned all men sinners for the sin of Adam was that He foresaw that, by the working of natural causes, his depravity would taint their moral nature. He foresaw and allowed this, and He resolved, in His dispensations towards them to treat the whole generation of humanity as a fallen race. The discourse produced something like a sensation in the Presbytery. The discourse was universally condemned as a wretched production, and was not sustained ... I was allowed to go to the Hall, but was enjoined to write a new essay on the "Imputation of Sin and Righteousness".

I had not much difficulty with this. I suspected, even before I gave my discourse, that some of the statements it contained were extreme. I consequently wrote a new discourse, and rubbed down a little of the old angularities.

At /

(1) App. 8; page 66.

At the first meeting of the Presbytery, which I attended after the Hall, I told them that my essay was ready. They said that they had not time to hear it read on that day, but they would get it on some future occasion. I never mentioned it again; neither did they; I was therefore never purged of heresy".

The controversy did not end with the deposition of Mr. Morison; it was carried on by Drs. Brown and Balmer, who, in the Synod, claimed to hold some of the views for which Mr. Morison was deposed, such as "the Atonement was in one sense as wide as the human race", which to them did not constitute "a material deviation from the great stream of Calvinistic Theology". Principal Cairns points out that from this controversy relief was brought to those who felt the inconsistency of a universal Gospel which was hampered by restrictions of Election; Christian largeheartedness was encouraged; charity now played its part in ministerial communion, and to the interpretation of the symbolic books of Scripture men could bring a broader outlook so long as this was "consistent with truth and sincerity". Summing up, Principal Cairns further affirms - "upon the whole ... the controversy, though confined, with the exception of the Scottish Congregationalists, to the United Secession Church, has by its remote, as well as its direct impression, exerted a valuable influence in liberalising the tone of Scottish theology, while it has done nothing to derange its equilibrium or remove the landmarks".

A further development of liberal thought manifested itself within the United Secession Church, when all the breaches made by "Lichts and Auld Lichts", "Burgher and Anti-Burgher" were healed in the historic United Presbyterian Church, for, when the Church of Scotland and the Free Church were striving to meet the demands brought about by the Disruption, thereby delaying /

delaying the advancement of liberal thought, the United Presbyterian Church framed and passed in 1879 a Declaratory Act by which large freedom was granted to her ministers and members. Principal Cairns in speaking to the statement on which the Act was based affirms, "We propose nothing in the way of repeal, or abrogation, or recall of the standards, but rather as checking and counterbalancing it, giving a counterpoise to what otherwise might be looked upon as too strong and extreme".

In that Church, however, there were two members who had advocated more than was contained in the Declaratory Act. They both made dogmatic statements, which called for investigation. One of these members was Mr. Fergus Ferguson, 1832-1911, and the other Mr. David Macrae, both able men in the ranks of the ministry. Mr. Ferguson's speculations in regard to the atonement, election, justification, righteousness and the intermediate state were distasteful to many; and at a meeting of the Synod 1880, he was found to have broken the law of the Church, but, though pronounced guilty, Mr. Ferguson was allowed to remain in his charge so that in reality he won for the ministry of the U.P. Church the right to depart from, or interpret, the Westminster Confession. In the case of Mr. Macrae, who for several years had maintained, in Church Courts and elsewhere, that the Church was bound to disclaim the eschatological doctrine of the Confession, and, in the final issue, he also "claimed freedom to hold and teach within the Church the theory of Conditional Immortality or that of Universal Restoration"; the result was different in the case of Ferguson. (McEwen's Life of Cairns, page 676).

The views for which Ferguson was censured were denial of the forensic view of the atonement; his rejection of election; his definition of justification as a state not an act; the penalty of sin was not spiritual and eternal death, /

death, but annihilation of personality. The sacrifice of Christ was not completed on the Cross, as Campbell believed, but was carried on in Eternity; there was also the denial of total depravity, whilst he held, man could not become righteous in his own strength; sin was perversity of the will; and righteousness was recognition of, and sympathy with, the Divine Will; he also held the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God who had given salvation to all.

The biographer of Ferguson, Dr. Leckie, traces these beliefs of Ferguson to Dorner, to Philo, to Boehme, and the presentation of Redemption to Campbell, everlasting Priesthood to the Roman doctrine of the mass, his views on sin to Augustinianism and ultimate destiny to Origen all regulated by the Hegelian dialectic.

It must be apparent to all students of Erskine that in Ferguson's efforts to advanced Creed revision he must not and could not have been a stranger to the writings of Erskine.

One of the leaders in the United Presbyterian Church, whose influence turned the balance in favour of Ferguson, was Professor Calderwood of the Moral Philosophy Chair in Edinburgh University.

In his opinions, Calderwood was on the side of orthodoxy, but when that position is placed along side the Professor's theory of Conscience, it must be apparent that he was in sympathy with Ferguson's view "of the moral powers inherent in our fallen nature". Calderwood's "theory of Conscience was, that Conscience is the voice of God in the Soul of Man, and therefore could neither be educated nor essentially corrupted". And added to this the intuitionism of his philosophy, contradicted some of the tenets of Calvinism. (Leckie's *Ferguson, D.D., and His Theology*), page 230. When we compare the teaching of Chalmers on Conscience, with the definition of Conscience as held by Erskine, there is a striking likeness. /

likeness. Conscience according to Chalmers is the creation of a righteous Sovereign. Erskine sees in Conscience a purpose which he cannot dissociate from that of a Purposer ... I cannot but regard his purpose towards me as the unmistakable vindication of His own character. Calderwood goes further - as Erskine in one of his letters does ... "conscience is God". There is no evidence in Calderwood's handbook of Moral Philosophy that he was influenced by Erskine, but this can be said, Erskine had the same intuitive thoughts concerning Conscience before Calderwood taught his theory of Conscience to generations of students.

Among those in the United Presbyterian Church to whom history must give a place for his endeavour to raise Religious Thought in Scotland above the sectarian, and narrow preoccupations of the age in which he laboured, is the Rev. W.B. Robertson, D.D., of Irvine, 1820-1886. In this effort he found friends not only in his own Communion, but also in all the Churches. One of his most valued friends was Dr. Walter C. Smith who, as we shall see, had a very prominent place in carrying on the work of the pioneer Thomas Erskine. The other friends of Robertson were Principal Caird, Dr. Norman Macleod, and George MacDonald, the preacher and moralist, and though we may not agree with the statement of a reviewer in the Christian Instructor in regard to "Confidential Converzazione meetings of those who are like-minded", still these leaders of thought drank at a common fountain, or source, not very far removed from Linlathen. Early in his student days, Robertson came under the influence of Maurice, and was also interested in the mystery of Hades in regard to which topic, George Gilfillan, in some published Sermons, had laid himself open to the suspicion of heresy: page 21, Life of Robertson. In a college sermon on the text, "not in the sepulchre of the kings", the young preacher, in reference /



reference to what comes after death, asked, "why should we limit the power of mercy? We may yet, when the visions of hope are realized - we may see him arguing a higher right to gratitude with the thief upon the cross; or he may stand by the throne and receive his crown of glory, while the tale is swelling to an anthem, and we hear in the music of heaven, This is that King Ahaz". Page 31.

Writing to Miss Crum from Mentone in 1872, Dr. Robertson says, "I would like to learn what you may have heard of the farewell of Dr. McLeod Campbell ... For the anthem, in its movement through the earthly bars, is full of minor passages and discords, imperfectly resolved; but to him who hears it further on, these shall only bring in with a richer harmony of all chords on the original key, the chorus and refrain of God is love. And well for him that can seize (as Dr. Campbell did) on that governing key and keep it in sight, and recognise its presence, though unheard all through the music, through the most shattering discords and departures out of it. He has found that which gives all a unity and meaning". Page 252.

In a letter to Dr. John Muir of Sanscrit fame, he writes - The height of the divinity of Scripture of Christ Himself is expounded to me by the breadth of their humanity, as you measure the height of a tower by the distance, to which it throws the breadth of a shadow at its base. The Divine has not been made verses, but "made flesh, crucified, dead, risen again"; page 366.

In a letter to Professor Nichol, LL.D., Dr. Robertson writes quite in the line of Erskine - "The spirit of a man goeth upward; and, if you face round upon him from a pulpit or a platform above, and hurl down dogmas in the teeth of him, you will crush his aspirations and break his ascent ... The greatest of all teachers was lifted up upon a Cross that He /

He might draw all men unto Him, and it is then when we in our measure are lifted up upon a Cross of suffering, of mental agony, or moral grief, or other great anguish, that we are most powerful to draw others after us upward". Page 400.

Writing to another correspondent, Dr. Robertson says, "what a difference there is between resting our spirits in their anguish upon mere written words and resting them upon a warm beating bosom. For even His written words may not comfort you unless spoken by his own living voice". Page 433.

The following too would have pleased Erskine, - "may not saints increase while sects decrease or even mount in number through the fall of the membership. Page 449. To the question - who then can be saved? If there were seven in an upset boat and the hand of the deliverer was stretched out to save you, would you first ask "Do you mean to save us all, or only some of us?" Would you not rather grasp and keep hold of the saving hand? Page 394.

Dr. John Muir had a difficulty in accepting the Church's view of the Divinity of Christ, while honouring Him and loving Him with all his heart, he said, "But I tell him he is just the wise man from the East laying down his wealth of learning at the Saviour's feet". Page 394.

Some of his sayings are instructive, "when any system is logically complete, reject it; it must be false. "All truth is the combination of two opposing truths". "No people", he would say, "were such absolute predestinarians as the Scotch Covenanters in their creed; none were so determined on their own way in their lives". Page 394.

Another name must be mentioned, that of the Rev. George Gilfillan of Dundee, 1813-1892. The reason for this arises from two causes. Gilfillan was not wholly orthodox. He taught the Fatherhood of God long before it was a popular and /

and common theme in the U.P. Church of which he was a minister. Further, in regard to eschatological questions he was a free-lance. Certainly he did not keep within the lines of the Confession. Consequently he was "suspect" in the estimation and eyes of the orthodox. The other reason is, he was one of those who had fellowship with Erskine of Linlathen. In his biography we read, "Carlyle was visiting Mr. Erskine of Linlathen and with him called on Gilfillan in Dundee" - 1843, and in 1850 Gilfillan writes, "I spent a forenoon lately with Thomas Erskine and Thomas Carlyle on the brink of the German Ocean (walking out from Linlathen). It was fine to find their deep and eternal dissimilarities mellowed and softened into harmony, and to hear the concert formed between the meek, low voice of the one, and the strong, yet still and melancholy accents of the other. It was the flute accompanying the sea. I could not strongly sympathise with either, but I loved and - shall I add? - pitied both. I suspect I was repaid in kind. Pitied both! No doubt! for George Gilfillan was no mean self-appraiser, yet he had the intuitive discernment to see what Erskine had discovered before him (1) Universal Restoration at which Gilfillan shied - "I am no believer in Eternal Punishment nor have I been for years. (30th. December, 1850 Letter page 145.) And now I find few who, when you come to close quarters, are. But I do not believe in the universal restoration of Midgees, Madmen, Tigers, Serpents, and all other Dark Disarrangements we have called men. I incline to Destructionism; or rather to the idea of God selecting ... His own children from among the mass, and leaving the others silently to die away" ... But I believe also that the number of the elect company should be "a great multitude which no man can number".

On the 4th. October, 1853, Gilfillan writes that he had issued a little book entitled "The Grand Discovery", or "The Fatherhood /

Fatherhood of God". "My object is to inculcate a doctrine you hold - namely, that without a revelation we never could have reached any certain knowledge of a Divine Father". The main points of this tractate are, "God elects in sovereignty, and sovereignty means not acting from mere caprice, or in opposition to justice, but giving none account of any of his matters at present; acting with the dignity and reticence of a monarch who does not choose to reveal his secrets, save at the time and in the manner He sees fit, but whose character is enough to show that his secrets are all holy secrets, and his mysteries of Godliness". It is quite evident that Gilfillan does not bring out of the work entitled "The Grand Discovery - or The Fatherhood of God" much in the line of Erskine's thoughts on the Fatherhood of God, but at least Gilfillan could speak of God as a Father, and of this fact as a Grand Discovery!

It is necessary to take into consideration another body, the Evangelical Union - a movement which originated in a reaction from the Calvinistic doctrine of the Westminster Confession, in so far as that relates to Predestination and to Unconditional Election <sup>(1)</sup> and Reprobation; (Ferguson: History of the Evangelical Union, 1876). From the document which expresses the Basis of Union, we discover the principles for which this body stood ... "the love of God the Father in the gift and sacrifice of Jesus to all men, everywhere without distinction, exception, or respect of persons; of God the Son, in the gift of Himself and sacrifice of Himself as a true propitiation for the sins of the world; of God the Holy Spirit in the present and continuous work of applying to the souls of all men the provision of divine grace".

The origin of the Evangelical Union Church in Scotland was, we have seen, the joint result of expulsions from the United /

(1) App. 14

United Secession Church and the Congregational Church. The leader in the first of these communions was James Morison, whose case has been already considered on page 150 of this Thesis, and in the Congregational Church, the man, whose actions were responsible for the breach in that fellowship, was Dr. Wardlaw. Morison was deposed by The United Secession Church, whereas Wardlaw was the leader of the Congregational Church in the discipline of those, who cast in their lot, so far as beliefs were concerned, with James Morison. Dr. Wardlaw agreed with Morison as to the extent of the atonement of Christ, but to quote the word of Dr. Fergus Ferguson (Evangelical Union Worthies, page 246), "whenever Mr. Kirk with my father (Fergus Ferguson, Senior) and Dr. Morison himself went the length of saying that the influence of the Holy Spirit was resistible, and that the election of grace was conditional, considering these Armenian positions to be sound, (Dr. Wardlaw) he instituted the Ecclesiastical proceedings that issued in the expulsion of nine students from his Theological Academy, of whom the writer was the youngest - as well as the disownment of five Glasgow Congregational Churches ... in the neighbourhood of Glasgow by the four Glasgow Congregational Churches, two of which rejected communities were the churches in Hamilton and Bellshill, of which Fergus Ferguson, Senior, was minister". Ferguson found shortly afterwards a sphere in Aberdeen and had, for his colleague, one who influenced Scottish Religious Thought - Principal Fairbairn, first at Bathgate, then at Aberdeen, and as Principal at Mansfield College, Oxford.

C H A P T E R      I V .

When we return to another stream of religious thought in Scotland, as this appears in the life and work of the Church of Scotland, we see a similar development, though manifesting itself in another setting. The case of McLeod Campbell liberated and synthesised more fully the thoughts and positions advanced and held by Erskine, and also by such a liberal and capable scholar in the person of Principal Scott. Into the dry bones of much that was orthodox, there came movement, and the rigours of Calvinism were mitigated by a new and humaner vision of divine truths. The minority, in support of McLeod Campbell, though small, was composed of loyal and able churchmen who kept before the Church the standpoint for which McLeod Campbell suffered. In this way men were induced and lead to examine for themselves the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood.

In a volume of Sermons, (Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1858), by the Rev. John Caird, Park Church, Glasgow, and afterwards Principal of Glasgow University, there is evidence that the writer was not unacquainted with the atmosphere into which Erskine leads his readers. Here, undoubtedly, are the thoughts of Erskine as these have passed through the alembic of another's mind..... "Of much that is contained in Scripture, the mind of man is so constituted as immediately and intuitively, when brought face to face with it, to recognise the truthfulness or reality. As it needs no outward attestation to prove to the tasteful eye the beauty of fair scenes, as sweet sounds need no authentication of their harmony to the sensitive ear, so between the spirit of man and that infinite world of moral beauty and harmony, which revelation discloses, there is a correspondence so deep and real that the inner eye and ear, if undiseased, discern at once in divine things their own best witness and authority.

In/

In the original structure of the soul there is an unwritten revelation which accords with the external revelation of Scripture. Within the depths of the heart there is a silent oracle, which needs only to be rightly questioned to elicit from it a response in accordance with that voice which issues from the lively oracles of God. By the statement that the truths of revelation commend themselves to the conscience, or consciousness of men, it is not implied that man, by the unaided exercise of his consciousness, could have discovered them. In claiming for man's spirit a power of recognising and responding to the truth of God, we do not arrogate for it a capacity of itself to originate that truth. If there be an internal revelation already imprinted on the human spirit, what need, it might be asked, for any other? If the truths of Scripture be so congenial to man's mind, in such exact correspondence with the principles of reason and conscience, might not reason and conscience work out those truths independently of any external aid? What necessity for an outward authority to announce to me that which, by the fundamental laws of my being, I cannot help believing? If the doctrine of religion accord with man's conscience as the principles of arithmetic or geometry accord with man's reason, what need for an oracle to reveal the former any more than the latter? In asserting that divine revelation is self-evidencing do we not virtually assert that it is uncalled-for or superfluous? Now, to all such questions the obvious answer is, that the power to recognise truth, when presented to us, does not by any means imply the power to find out or to originate the same truth. We may apprehend what we could not invent."

"Millions can perceive and appreciate the power, the reality, the trueness of nature, of the great writer's productions/



productions, who could never themselves have produced them. Now to apply this principle to the case before us - it is obvious that the appeal of Scripture to man's reason and conscience does not by any means imply in man's reason and conscience a capacity to discover divine truth by their own unaided exercise."

"As light opens the close-shut flower-bud to receive light, or as the sunbeam playing on a sleeper's eyes by its gentle irritation opens them to see its own brightness, so the truth of God, shining on the soul quickens and stirs into activity the faculty by which that very truth is perceived."

"Or the recognition of the truth as it is in Jesus by the awakened soul may be represented as still more closely parallel to the feeling of one who revisits, in reverse of fortune and after long years of absence, a spot with which, in other and happier days, he was familiar.....until at last something occurs to touch the spring of association, when instantly with a rush of recollection old sights, impressions, incidents, come thick and crowding on the spirits, and the outward scene becomes clothed with a new vividness, and is perceived with a new sense of identity."

"It would be a mistaken kindness to take a child, whose destined lot in life is a lowly and penurious one, and let him live in a home of wealth and refinement long enough to familiarise him with the tastes, habits, feelings of a high social sphere; for by doing so you would only awaken in his mind unsatisfied desires and render him wretched in his humble condition, by the consciousness of a standard far above his resources." (Sermon 1.)

In these extracts we find the atmosphere in which Erskine thought and wrote. The illustrations used in these passages/

passages at once send us back to make comparison with those of Erskine. Caird, evidently at that period of his ministry, was a diligent student of Erskine's books, and found in them both inspiration and guidance, for there are in the extracts distinct proofs of a deep knowledge of the remarks on the "Internal Evidence", and also of "The Doctrine of Election", (p. 321). It was in the exposition of these topics, dear to the heart of Erskine, that Caird did much to widen religious thought, enlarge the conception of God, and give to reason its rightful place, whilst at the same time, holding, like Erskine, the necessity for a divine revelation.

The part played by Dr Norman Macleod in helping on the effort of Erskine cannot be set aside. All through his biography we see the same problem confronting him as called for solution in the experience of McLeod Campbell and of Erskine. Very early in his ministry, the question arises, "Is a Christian not entitled to draw lessons of conduct from natural religion interpreted or revealed?" "May he not study final causes in his moral constitution?" Writing to a correspondent, September 28, 1838 (p.129, Life) he says, "Beware of the fearful temptation of thinking that you have had a sufficient evidence of being converted and that, as the elect are never lost, you may take some ease in Zion. This is not too much for the wicked heart of man to conceive". "How exquisitely does Christ point to nature linking the world without to the world within!" (p. 133, Life).

In these words we perceive that Macleod in spirit was in line with Erskine's positions, so far as these relate themselves to what Erskine said and wrote.

Professor Flint (Scottish Divines, 1505-1872, MacNiven and Wallace, 1883, Edinburgh) writes, "Dr. MacLeod, however, although/

although not a great theologian, exerted great, and I believe, most beneficial influence in our theology. He presented to the popular mind in the form best suited to it, what was best in the modern theology, without in any fundamental respect departing from what was good in our older theology." (pp.454) Might we not go farther and say that, as Erskine, by his sheer goodness of character and personality illustrated one of Erskine's own dicta - the relation of belief and character - so Macleod, in, and through his charm of character, touched the popular imagination and thus found for religious thought an avenue to the heart, and mind of the ordinary man? At pp. 155 of the Life, we find these words, "If Christ did not die for all men, how can it be said that God willed all men to be saved? Can He will any to be saved for whom there is no atonement? If Christ did not die for all men, in what sense is He said to be the Saviour of all men, and specially of those that believe?" In that part of The Life, MacLeod's Journal, we have on pp.179 the following... "What precise relation does revelation without bear to revelation within - the book to the conscience? Is anything a revelation to me which is not actually a revealing - a making known to me, or in other words, which is not recognised as true by me? Do I believe any spiritual truth in the Book, except in so far as I see it to be true in conscience and reason? Is my faith in the outward revelation not in exact proportion to my inward perception of the truth uttered in the letter? Herein lies the difference between assenting to the Principle of Newton, because written by a great mathematician and not because I see them to be true, and my assent to the Bible because written by inspired men and not because I see how truly they spake?" /

spake? Whether do I honour Newton more by examining and sifting and seeing for myself the truth of his propositions or by merely taking them on his word? Can any revelation coming from without be so strong as a revelation from spirit to spirit? Could any amount of outward authority be morally sufficient to make me hate a friend or do any action I felt to be morally wrong, while apprehending it to be wrong? It might correct me as to facts which depend entirely upon testimony and not upon spiritual truth."

The similarity of topics, and the doubts and difficulties arising out of the problems in the facts, and the method of solving them are so distinctly counterparts in the experience of MacLeod and Erskine that we must seek for some relationship between these two thinkers. That relationship seems to be established in the words to be found on pp.127 of Vol. II of The Life, "When I come into close contact with such men as Stanley, John Campbell, Erskine, Scott, Maurice, Davies, Ludlaw Hughes, I feel that I could enjoy heaven with them."

It has often been a matter of speculation what the influence of Erskine would have been had he been a teacher, responsible to the Church of Scotland. Some think his views might have been better known, but could these, in certain aspects, have had a wider constituency in Scotland than that which Norman MacLeod possessed? Erskine, as an individual, might have been better known, but that was of little importance, for to him the main issue was the spread of religious principles. Had Erskine chosen the men to propagate the truth intrusted to him, he could not have chosen better than just the men in all the churches, who, in different ways, along the line of their personality, carried the torch of truth, lit first at the torch of Erskine/

Erskine.

In one sense Erskine was officially connected with the Church of Scotland, for by virtue of his position of chief heritor, he had an influence in the appointment of the parish ministers to the charge of Mains. No one discharged this duty more faithfully than Erskine, and hence Mains, in the words of Principal Shairp, had enjoyed the benefit of a succession of unusually good ministers. Two of these ministers were John Robertson, D.D., afterwards minister of the Cathedral Church, Glasgow, and John McMurtrie, D.D. Erskine, in the exercise of his privilege, did not seek, as he says himself, a minister who would reflect his (Erskine's) views, but the pastor he desired is set forth in a letter to the Committee appointed to select, on the translation of Mr. Robertson to Glasgow. That letter is a classic, in such matters of presentation, and perhaps, more so now, because of the existence of popular election. In the letter Erskine stresses the point that the minister "must exercise a very important influence through his theology"; further, he writes, "we must also desire that he should be capable of communicating to others what he has learned for himself of the will of God, in such a manner as to arrest conscience and convince their understanding".... "to awaken in the minds of his hearers real earnest thought as to the meaning of their own existence....that God is a Father..... and that the purpose of His love is to educate us, as His children, into a participation of His own character, and thus to make us sharers in His own blessedness....love dominant in all God's dealing with men.... Jesus Christ, God's unspeakable gift, in whom is revealed not only the extent of the Father's love, but also the filial character, which that love desires to call forth in men. (pp. 401, Vol. 11, Letters).

Both/

Both Dr. Robertson and Dr. M'Murtrie fulfilled the prophecy and expectations of Erskine in regard to their ability and character, not only in Mains, but in wider spheres of work. In "Pastoral Counsels", (London; James Nisbet & Co , 1865, by Dr. Robertson), we see that the years spent by this minister in Mains, as Dean Stanley says, left a deep impression on his character and work. At pp. 309 of "Pastoral Counsels" the words occur ... "I think I have learned to understand more clearly with what perfect freeness the gospel of reconciliation\* ought to be preached; or, in other words, how deep, how universal, is the love of God... It is imagined that something must be done to deserve it, either by ourselves, or by someone for us... Our blessed Saviour did not die that God might be induced to love us, but because He did love us, and because this was the mode, in which, for reasons known to His wisdom, and partially, but only partially, discernible by us, it was good and expedient, and, we may believe, necessary that His love should be expressed. The good you get from a physician's care and medicine is health. Even so the good we are to look for from the care and discipline of Almighty God is the health of our souls, that is, holiness .. we are saved, not because we are righteous, but in being made righteous ... but people would seem to imagine sometimes that salvation is a thing which is given as a kind of reward for faith, or at any rate, as a consequence of faith ... faith itself is a part of salvation ... it is not the province of faith to make anything true which was true before, but only to lay hold upon that which is true, and apply it to its proper uses .... our believing a thing does not make it true, but we believe it is true .... the freeness of God's grace can be in no way injurious to holy living...."

There are two names which will always be associated with/

with the theologian, and saint of Linlathen; these are Principal Shairp, who, in his reminiscences of Erskine contributed to the Second Series of Letters, has placed all readers of Erskine in his debt; the second name is that of Principal John Tulloch who in his book "Movements of Religious Thought" has given a wise and discriminating study of Erskine and his place in the theological thought of Scotland.

Principal Shairp confirms the fact that Erskine was not an iconoclast; he was a builder with an open mind, ever ready to see the two sides which every question has, and though his own message was criticised he was always glad to explain and help others in their difficulties. Erskine, according to Shairp, was a man possessed of the power to make friends, and especially with young men. Some of Shairp's sentences reveal the true Erskine and help the reader to a synthesis of Erskine's thought. There is, for instance, such a statement as ... "The great thing is to identify our conscience hourly with God." "This light (Conscience).... making him feel the hollowness and discomfort of life apart from God" is another way to define the worryings of conscience. "There is into each man a continual inflowing of the Logos", which defines Erskine's position in regard to the ultimate restoration of the race. There is the claim that "conscience is the great organ in Theology", with Shairp's note of inquiry "does this not make man himself the measure of all truth", and Erskine's reply, "Conscience is not mine. I am conscience's." "And a man truly awakened will not set up his own conscience as a rival of the Bible." "Christ is the great universal conscience" "I explain conscience by the Bible, and the Bible by conscience, both ways; and till they meet and illuminate each the other, there is no true light, no true conviction/

conviction." "The Gospel history is the consciousness I find within me expressed outwardly." "He (Christ) came showing us what is the character of the Father." "Christ's second capacity is as the Head of the whole race." "Christ once entered into humanity, and enters again into each man."

Shairp was not a blind follower of Erskine, but a wise critic, and perceived what many failed to notice, that the thoughts of Erskine were centred in principles for which all through his life Erskine had testified by character, word and pen, and at a time, too, when these principles were under a cloud created by ignorance, prejudice, unbelief and orthodoxy. And as such, Erskine has been a force in Scotland, for around the principles dear to him many a contest has raged, and for these principles victory has been won.

Scottish religious thought as represented in such terms as Faith, Freeness of the Gospels, Fatherhood of God, Election and Final Restoration - terms familiar to all readers of Erskine, can never be dissociated from his written words. Principal Shairp as we have seen in his story of Erskine, calls attention to the influence of Erskine over young men, and this explains the energising life, which was transforming and leavening Scottish Religious Thought at this period.

Principal Tulloch was not only a friend and frequent guest at Linlathen, but also a wise and generous critic of Erskine's opinions, and it is evidence of the strong, as well as winsome, personality of Erskine, that he was able to enlist men of such outstanding ability to discuss and also assimilate his views. In one of Tulloch's popular books, "Beginning Life", there is a paragraph, pp.137, in which occur the following words in explanation of/



of the internal witness. "The awakened spiritual intelligence of man, in its highest and most developed forms, continues to find, as it has found in past ages, its truest satisfaction in the Gospel. It finds here a revelation of God and a revelation of itself such as it finds nowhere else - a witness of Perfection above coming down to meet imperfection on earth, and to raise it to its own blessed union and strength. It finds here a power to quicken and enlighten, to regenerate and sanctify - a power which brings the alienated soul back to God, and heals its anxieties, and kindles its torpor, and from the darkness of sin raises it to the light of heaven. It is impossible that a religion which thus leads to God should not come from Him - that our spiritual being should be quickened into life and righteousness by a falsehood ... You are made fit for paradise, nay, paradise has begun in you here - for you live." It would be, indeed, hard to find words which so tally, as Erskine would say, with some of the wisest sayings of "The Remarks on the Internal Evidence", and in Erskine's obiter dicta to which Tulloch must have listened on various occasions.

What was the result or influence of the writings of those men who followed Erskine on the religious thought of the Church of Scotland, which was recovering her prestige damaged by the Disruption of 1843?

The answer to this question is to be found in "Scotch Sermons" published in 1880 and in the official report of the Church of Scotland Congress, 1899.

The "Scotch Sermons" had their genesis in the fact that in 1880 not only were there men in the Church of Scotland, such as Mr. Robertson of Glasgow Cathedral - men/

men with a high ideal in regard to the Evangelical Element of the Gospel, but also men who were claiming to be leaders in thought and desirous of a fresh synthesis of Christian Faith, men like Principal John Tulloch of St. Andrews, who early in his professorial work directed the attention of his students to McLeod Campbell's book on The Atonement, and spoke of it in terms of high commendation. Tulloch thus very early declared himself out of touch and sympathy with the Calvinistic positions; to him the age of dogmatism in the discrimination of truth was past and a new method lay to the hand of theologians. This new method is revealed in the Scotch Sermons. It was a higher development of the spirit which guided the Cambridge Platonists and the liberal theologians of the 17th century. Calvinistic intolerance had ceased for Tulloch, and those who were in sympathy with him.

Christian science and Christian reason, it was thought, could embrace in their ample thoughtfulness the experience of the past as well as the eager aspirations of the present. It was a broad church movement within the Church of Scotland.

18 This teaching spread and one of the reasons for its influence was the "Scotch Sermons" of which the preface says - (these Sermons) "originated in the wish to gather a few specimens of a style of teaching, which increasingly prevails amongst the clergy of the Scottish Church, and may serve to indicate a growing tendency and to show the direction in which thought is moving. There were in all thirteen writers. Sermon No. 10 makes the following striking assertions which are in direct and complete contradiction to Calvinistic thought and doctrine ... "Evil is not an entity" in itself - but "an undeveloped good which/

which will pass under the discipline of order" - "another name for God" ... "Christ only figuratively expiated sin or purchased its remission." The work of Christ was to reveal the infinite placability of the Divine Nature." Sermon No. 12 affirms ... "As man is the subject of a Divine but unperfected education in this life, there is a strong argument for the continuance of man's life hereafter and the development of that life."

It is necessary, however, before we examine in detail the new phase or development of Scottish Religious Thought to ask were there no thinkers in the Church of Scotland, who were unwilling to subscribe to the views of those in line with Erskine and MacLeod Campbell? The answer is to be found first in a pamphlet entitled "The Doctrinal Declaration of the Conference of the Evangelical Union Reviewed and brought to the Test of Scripture" by a minister of the Church of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1862: Paton & Ritchie). In this pamphlet the writer traverses the claims of the E.U. Conference that the preaching of the Gospel according to the tenets of that Church had proved effective in regenerated and renewed lives and brings on the other hand seriatim to this E.U. Statement the test of Scripture. The writer of the pamphlet examines and rejects the E.U. beliefs on Free Will, Divine Sovereignty, Divine Foreknowledge, Foreordination, Original Sin, the Unity of the Godhead, the Remedial Plan, the Nature and Extent of the Love of God, and the Nature and Extent of that atonement of the Son and shows all the E.U. positions, - (which show the influence of the teaching of Erskine), are contradictory to Scripture. The critic believes the enthusiasm of E.U. preaching has achieved much but refuses to recognise the claim, as he puts it, that beliefs resting on defective renderings of Scripture can be justified in renewed character/

character. The pamphlet is an echo of the past, and shows that the work of the pioneer Erskine could not be hid for his contention was there was action and reaction between character and belief, but not in the way as presented in the pamphlet; orthodoxy still claimed its rights!

The other work bearing on this line of thought is that of Professor Crauford of Edinburgh University - "The Fatherhood of God", issued in 1868. This book shews an advancement and development from the positions held by the writer of the Pamphlet already mentioned. The idea of the Fatherhood of God as a principle in Theology was making progress and influencing the thoughts of religious thinkers. The principle demanded attention; it created an atmosphere and in some of its aspects had entered into the belief of men of open mind. It was a principle which was proving its usefulness not only in creating discussion but also in opening up fresh and new fields of thought. We have seen how Gilfillan said the principle of the Fatherhood of God was the "Grand Discovery" but Crauford asserts the idea or principle of the Fatherhood of God was always present in Scottish theological thought, only, it was so apparent that writers and thinkers did not emphasise the obvious; he shows the Fatherhood of God was as well known - though not better - to the reader of the old Testament as to the reader of the New Testament. In all this, whatever the truth is, there is at least discussion and contention in regard to the assertions of Erskine who, if not the discoverer of the land of truth beyond, yet, was the one who blazed the path to the wider horizon. In the statement of Crauford in regard to the readers of the Old and New Testament he comes into grips with a writer in the Free Church of Scotland, who also was tentatively inclined to be influenced by the new trend of thought. This writer was/

was Principal Candlish who, in his book *The Fatherhood of God*, denied that the Fatherhood was known as a principle in the old Testament. God was Father, in the sense of Creator and Maker, but not on the terms of Father as understood by Crauford. A worthy duel ensued. Crauford shows the defective aspect of Principal Candlish's assertion. One of the peculiar positions of Candlish is that he refuses to define Fatherhood and affirms it is the duty of those, who have put forth the idea to do the work of definition. Crauford may not define the term Fatherhood of God but he gives a definite description of the idea "we hold ourselves warranted to apply to Almighty God the analogy of Fatherhood with reference to His intelligent creatures no less than that of Judgeship or Kingship, or any other human analogy by which he may be appropriately represented; inasmuch as the fatherly relation, as it subsists on Earth, is allowed to be "fitted, and probably intended, to suggest the idea of a similar relation between Earth and Heaven". Of the words under inverted commas from "fitted" Crauford in a foot note says, "in using the words, Candlish may have meant that the fatherly relation - not as actually subsisting on the footing of creation and providence, but as destined ultimately to subsist on the footing of adopting grace. If such, however, was the meaning of his statement, it is altogether at variance with the result of experience.. The analogy certainly is not to that gracious relation which God sustains towards his "children of adoption", but to that natural and original relation, which he bears to those who are His children by creation, formed after His image and sustained and nourished by His providence". Crauford maintains the necessity for an atonement in the line/

line of Biblical truth and, if it be asserted, that men say that the Divine Father evacuates some of the positions, even of an earthly father, the reply is the Kingdom of God is vaster than the family circle, but he saves himself and his position by denying to God "personal resentment", "implacable vindictiveness or unwillingness to show mercy" but even in this the writer proves how far he has travelled in 1868 from the orthodox position of 1828. In dealing with the nature of the atonement he adopts the position of Erskine that the mediatorial work of Christ must not be regarded as an inducement that God should pardon His fallen creatures rather does the atonement spring from "the unspeakable warmth and tenderness of His fatherly love". The writer, however, carefully avoids the idea of the new thought that the mediatorial work of Christ is exclusively to be regarded as a manifestation of love - apart from expiation or satisfaction to divine justice or that the atonement was only to assure men that no obstacle stood in the way for which Christ had any need to stand. The objective barrier removed by modern thought still remains for Crauford and the subjective theory of modern thought was not sufficient in his mind to account for the atonement. The sufferings of Christ are not merely salutary instructions. These sufferings are not explained by affirming Christ came as an Incarnation of Deity and the words before such a thought can be entertained, the words "If it be possible, let this cup pass" - must be explained. In like manner the atonement is more than mere self-sacrifice for the Saviour's death can be so considered - (as an illustration of self-sacrifice to draw men to God) "on the principle that mankind are so fully capable of appreciating the matchless worth and blessedness of self-sacrifice as to need no example like that of Jesus to commend it to them".

Other/

Other aspects of the atonement are considered i.e.

(1) The sufferings equalled the Divine Sympathy of Christ, who was not substituted for us inasmuch as He identified Himself with us - "and uttered a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the Sin of man". The answer to this is sympathy, in relation to Christ, is seldom mentioned, but there are frequent allusions to sufferings.

(2) The theory controverted by Crauford is that the atonement of Christ was the necessary result of perfect holiness coming up against the evil of humanity.

The conclusion reached by the author is - we have in the mediation of Christ not a way of escape from but of access to God, which God Himself has opened up. What is added to this does not in any way answer to anything in the mind of those who put forth their theories of the atonement - - "and therefore, however, much we may be disposed to magnify the love of Christ in dying for us, we ought not the less to magnify the love of the Father in giving up His Son".

To the mind of Crauford the atonement as he understands it is fully perfect and sufficient; it is also unlimited in its freeness and universality; added to these the God of all grace sincerely seeks the compliance of mankind with them; but at the same time insists on "God's secret purpose to bring an elect people to a willing and hearty reception of the great salvation" pp.130. And therefore he rejects the idea that evangelical Sonship and spiritual benefits are given to humanity; he also sets aside the idea of Christ being one with every man - Christ the true root and original archetype of humanity - and therefore that all mankind in Him are redeemed, regenerated, justified and adopted, nor can he allow that nothing now belongs to faith but to recognise these benefits pp. 152.

It/

It is evident from this discussion, which had been proceeding from the time, when Erskine finished practically his appeal to the reading public, that there had gathered round the principle of the Fatherhood of God a whole set of new ideas in the religious thought of Scotland, for, though, Crauford does not name Erskine, he identifies Maurice with the new outlook and in doing so does not give full value to the influence of Erskine in the development of the positions held by the English theologian, a fact which came to light, when in 1879 "The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament" was published. Erskine's contributions to the religious thought in Scotland to judge by the pages of a book may not seem much to the ordinary critic and observer, but, if it was only a small stream of thought, it has gathered in its course, from all sides. For one thing, if we may judge from the temper of the Christian Instructor, there came into the discussions of religious thought in Scotland by the time of Erskine's death a spirit of toleration and reasonableness which was reflected in all Erskine's writings. And by the principle of the Fatherhood of God the atonement became richer and poorer. It is not the purpose of this Thesis to defend Erskine's writings in the face of the criticism to which these have been subjected, but, yet, as we study the criticism and reservations of Professor Crauford we find an aspect of truth in the points criticised. There is an element of truth even in the theories of the atonement which may seem inadequate to explain the atonement, yet, when these imperfect aspects are examined there is left some gain to truth which gives to the conception or principle of the Atonement - <sup>(1)</sup> length and breadth of foundation, which were lacking in the somewhat stilted form of the forensic presentation, though this side of the principle is not lost in Erskine's presentation, for, Christ and only Christ could have entered, as the Divine Sap, into human life and so saved mankind.

(1) App.20.



The "Scotch Sermons" it will yet be found were epoch making and for their inspiration the works of Erskine must be taken into account. Principal John Caird in the opening discourse is on the side of Final Restoration which surely is the implication of the words .... "The infinite hunger for truth and goodness, the thoughts that wander through Eternity, the feelings of love and adoration which point to an object nothing less than infinite - it seems strange and monstrous that these inexhaustible capacities have no longer time for satisfaction than the lust or appetite which an hour will cloy." p.4.

Compare this with Erskine's words - "the process of spiritual education beyond this life relieves me at all events from the agonising thought that twenty six years of negligence are to fix the eternal condition of the soul for good or evil."

In the Second Sermon on Union with God, Principal Caird is expressing one of the recurring thoughts of Erskine when he says, "to enter into such identification with the very nature of Deity that your thoughts like mine, a Divine will, a Divine activity - to become thus one with God as I am, is not to transcend but to realise your true nature as men". p.21.

Dr. Cunningham's sermon "Home-spun Religion" is one which in a popular form does what Erskine did in his way. Erskine considered the good man was the best proof of Christianity just as the failures of the Christian was its greatest contradiction. \* \* \*

In his Sermon (IV) Dr. Cunningham is again a disciple of Erskine; "nothing but the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai could awe the nomad tribes of Israel into subjection. Nothing but the pains of purgatory or the horrors of hell has influence still with semi-savages. But this is/

is not the evangel of Jesus! And there is something good in the way in which your high Evangelical states the truth. "We keep God's commandment", he says, "Not that we may obtain salvation, but because we have obtained it, we lead a christian life, not that we may be saved but because we are saved! Mary was forgiven much, and therefore she loved much"!

In Sermon V, Law and Miracles by Rev.D.J.Ferguson,B.D. there is another exposition of the things which Erskine taught and emphasised ... "Christianity then is no rigid system of dogma, or of ecclesiastical forms, elaborated long ago and incapable of growth or change". "Christianity is, in short, the atmosphere in which we live and breathe, and of which unconsciously to ourselves, we sustain the pressure". "It is without us and we are within its circle; we do not become Christians, we are so from our birth".

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 "If we worship an infallible book and conceive of revelation as the publication once for all of a definite scheme of dogma we shall naturally cling to the past, and forget that there is anything divine in the world to-day". "Neither the philosopher who argued against, nor the divine who contended for miracle, was dealing with the essence of Christianity, and the complete triumph of either, would have made little change". Granted the historical accuracy of the narratives in the Gospel, even then the argument from miracle holds with regard to our Lord, a position similar to that which the argument from design holds with regard to the being, of a God. The latter does not prove God's existence; it only proves the existence of a great artist working upon materials ready to his hand. And in like manner, the former only proves that Christ was endowed with special power. About doctrine it is silent ---

(1) App. 38.

The Miracle is not the guarantee for the revelation but the revelation for the miracle". It cannot be denied --- there are many who, calling themselves by the name of Christ, shrink, avowedly or tacitly, from this particular dogma."

When we compare the above with what Erskine said and wrote it is evident that the writer of Law and Miracle was in sympathy with Erskine's views. Writing to Professor Lorimer 1858 (v.2.212) Erskine says - "this is specially needed here in Scotland, where a belief in the Bible is often substituted for faith in God, and as man is considered religious, not because he walks with God in his spirit but because he acknowledges and maintains the verbal inspiration of the sacred canon". "I cannot draw a distinct line between Inspiration in the Bible and Inspiration out of the Bible". "I believe that a true explanation of what Christianity means is the only evidence on which it can be received". To Bishop Ewing Erskine wrote, "the miracles of the Bible are not marvels, but illustrations of the Character of God" v.2.219". And to Lady Elgin. "Miracles are never final things: they do not terminate in themselves; they are signs of the kingdom,"v.1.96.

In Sermon VI entitled The Vision of God, it is said, "in art, in science, in literature, there are thousands who can appreciate the masterpieces of genius, for one who is able to create and execute. This last is the test of the Divine fire. And so in like manner, the purity of Christ appeals to us. We cannot find it in ourselves; but when it is presented to us, we recognise its claims to our reverent, homage and obedience". This is the argument of the Internal Evidence. The Christian religion is worthy of the character of God who approaches man first before the latter can take a single step God-ward.pp.97.

Professor/

Professor Knight in the seventh sermon associates himself with Erskine; "It is notorious that the practice of assent to traditional opinion has led to a habit of indifference". p.103.

In the ninth sermon the Rev. William Mackintosh, D.D., supports Erskine's idea, that if God took thousands of years in the formation of the red sandstone fossil, He will be as patient with man till the last shred of sin has been eradicated from the heart of every human being. This truth Mackintosh justifies by postulating the law of moral continuity - "only in these later times, when science in its researches into the material world has lighted everywhere upon the traces of an all-pervading continuity, has its existence in the moral and spiritual worlds of an analogous principle been confidently postulated. And if it can be shown without prejudice to the religious sentiment that the principle of continuity obtains in the moral sphere no less than in the material and rules the succession of religions as of other phenomena - that the judgment of God upon human action itself - this will be a step toward the reconciliation of faith with science, the conscious or suspected lack of which is the specific danger of our age, the source of its universal unrest and of its all but universal scepticism". p.161.

Sermon ten is from the same pen as the other from which the above is taken, and the subject matter is "the renovating power of Christianity". That renovating power - a favourite expression or thought of Erskine - is thus defined "the consciousness itself is fed from the deeper springs of reverence and sympathy, of personal love and trust; which, welling up first in the soul of Christ, have been/

been derived from him to all who had yielded to the attraction of the Cross, to an attraction which propagates itself from one to another, even without the word (I Peter III, I) by signs of a hidden life, not artificial, which the heart can decipher." p.190.

In Sermon 11 by the Rev. W.M.McFarlane we meet with the same difficulty which confronted Erskine. The former writes "We find in Scottish society a tendency to accept blindly the theological traditions handed down to us from the past and to receive as doctrines divine the opinions of doctors in divinity whom we have been accustomed to revere". p.198.

"To the Scriptures Protestants had conceded the infallibility which they have denied to the Church". pp.199.

"The utterances of Scripture may in some cases, it is avowed, be incomprehensible by the ordinary human faculties. They may awaken no response in the higher reason of man. They may excite repulsion even in his conscience. Still they proceed, it is alleged, from the eternal reason - they ought therefore to receive unquestioning assent from all who would be of the household of faith".

This is the belief of "those who hold the theory of its plenary inspiration and verbal infallibility" and this belief rests on the authority of the various Councils of the Church which decided as to the Canonicity of each book. The reformers did not hold such a theory. "They appealed from the Church to the Bible. - But they regarded the Bible not as true because authoritative but authoritative because true". "Luther's views in regard to the canon were/

were what many in these days would consider lax". "The Westminster Divines adhered to a doctrine which was substantially identical with that of the great Reformer". "Our full persuasion and assurance of the authority of Scripture is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts".

"The distinction between the human and the Divine elements in Scripture was not of course so distinctly recognised either by the Reformers or the Westminster Divines, as it is by thoughtful theologians in our own times". p.205.

Biblical criticism has forced the problem.

"We may claim therefore to have the Westminster Divines with us, when we assert that the Scriptures are authoritative because true, and only in such portions of them as awaken a response in those in whom reason and conscience, the faculties by which truth alone can be discerned, had been duly developed". p.206.

"The Scriptures contain a revelation to man of those truths which it most concerns him to know".

"The inherent reasonableness of the statements" in the word is the basis of belief.

What are the parts of The Confession as expressive  
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of the Bible specially untenable.

- (1) The descent of man from the Adam of the Book of Genesis.
- (2) Fall of Adam from a state of original righteousness; of eating forbidden fruit.
- (3) Imputation of Adam's guilt to all his posterity.
- (4) The Consequent death of all men in sin.
- (5) Redemption in Christ of an Election according to Grace.
- (6) The quickening in the elect of a new life -
  - (a) At Baptism (Romish)
  - (b) At moment of Conversion (Protestant)

Eternal Punishment and perdition of those who remain degenerate.p.220.

"Righteousness is blessedness - the expression of a truth verifiable in human experience - this implies a lawgiver who loves righteousness. Men have not created the ideals of the just and the merciful, which a mysterious energy within impels them to realise. They have not found that ideal for themselves any more than they have formed it for themselves. It has found them and implanted itself within them, growing with their growth, and strengthening with their strength". p. 235.

In Sermon 21, by the Rev. Patrick Stevenson we have the very essence of Erskine's teaching.

"That the infinite Author and Sustainer of the universe cares for every creature of his hand; that man owes to him more than existence, and such powers as are necessary for his maintenance; that his reason is an offshoot of the Divine intelligence, and that his soul is capable of understanding and appropriating the character of its source; that this Heavenly Father desires, working within the Laws of nature, mind and spirit to educate up to his likeness; that he is tender to that wherein we err and just in all his ways; that his nature is such as to win our trust, and his will leading such as to reward our following; and whether he giveth, withholdeth, or taketh away, it is our profit, that we may be "partakers of his holiness"; to know that we have such a Father is life for the soul." p.370.

Sermon 23, by R.H.Story D.D.

Paul's righteousness of faith - "is righteousness of character, which is deeper and greater than any righteousness of conduct".

"For it is not our own but the righteousness of

Christ/

Christ living in us, not a righteousness outside of us and put upon us as a cloak to hide our sins from God, not "imputed" to us as ours when it is really anothers; but the fresh and healthy outcome of our own heart and conscience and energy, quickened, transfigured, sanctified by the indwelling spirit of the "Lord our Righteousness". pp.394.

The two sermons of Mr. McFarlane of Lenzie came up for review by the General Assembly but the case was quickly disposed of since the Church of Scotland was neither keen for a heresy hunt nor willing to deny the progress of religious thought within her borders. Two methods of procedure came before the Assembly. Professor Flint moved that Mr. McFarlane be asked to disclaim the views to which exception had been taken. Dr. Cunningham on the other hand recommended caution on the part of the Assembly, which advice he supported in words to the effect that Mr. McFarlane was responsible solely for what he had said, and not for what he had not said. No man was responsible for his thoughts save to God; toleration was at stake and the bitter experience of the part should keep the Church from depositions. For Professor Flint's motion there voted 230 and for that of Dr. Cunningham 61. Two things remain to be noted. Mr McFarlane disclaimed the views to which exception had been taken and therefore there was no call for depositions; and the other fact is the minority in this case exceeded tenfold the minority of six in the McLeod Campbell decision. The minority in the case of McLeod Campbell was an insignificant number 6, now, for the development, largely of the same thoughts, that number had increased tenfold.

Evidently therefore, within the borders of a Church which/



which claimed to be National, and was a State Church, it was possible now to assert even a wider freedom of thought than was possible in a voluntary Church such as the U.P. Church, whose Declaratory Act has already been examined. That was surely a change of outlook, when we bear in mind what happened in the experience of McLeod Campbell.

In the discussion, at the Congress of 1899, <sup>(1)</sup> The Church: (a) Its vocation; (b) Its relation to modern Thought; there is evidence that a new outlook was before the minds of the clergy and laity of the Church of Scotland. This outlook or vision was not unknown to readers of Erskine.

In a speech delivered by Professor W.P. Paterson, D.D., then of the University of Aberdeen, there is clearly defined the vocation of the Church ... "There is the end which the Church must always have in view - the advancement of the Kingdom of God, and advancement not to be conceived in the terms used by Canon Gore - prophetic, priestly and kingly". Why? ... this method of developing the idea is both unjustifiable and dangerous. The Church is no doubt Christ's main instrument for the furtherance of His Kingdom upon earth, but it does not follow that the instrument represents Him in His exalted dignities, and shares in His vast prerogatives. To carry out a King's behests is not to rule nor is a prophet's mouth-piece a prophet". Compare this with what we find in a letter written by Erskine to Lady Elgin (20. 1. Vol. Letters of Erskine) where he states his objections to the Irvingite Church, which claimed to a higher degree the orders that Gore sets forth in regard to prophecy, "The object of prophecy is to draw our view forward out of seen things to the permanent triumph of God's righteous cause/

(1). App. 2. Church of Scotland Congress, 1899. Official Report pp. 30-31.

cause, (i.e. the Kingdom of God) - What I meant by the details of prophecy is rather when the prophecy is more considered than the thing prophesied, as when a sign is more considered than the thing signified."

"The Church in the fulfilment of its vocation must", said Professor Paterson, "keep in mind three things; (1) The earthly work of our Lord consisted to a large extent in the revelation and illustration of truth ... What, now, is to be said of the duty and powers of the Church in relation to this crowning revelation in Christ of which the New Testament Scriptures are the principal record and deposit? In the first place obviously to understand it, to elucidate it, to propagate it. Who, however, is to settle questions of doubt? Is it the infallibility of the Church? Is it exegesis or the "ipsissima verba" of the Creeds? These questions are answered by a quotation from the Confession - Chap. 10 "The Supreme Judge by which all decrees of councils, etc. are to be examined can be no other but the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scripture."

And to this there is an explanatory note ... "This canon, it is true, cannot mean precisely the same for us as for the Westminster Divines. They did not realise the divine human character of Scripture, or the progressiveness of revelation, and by them accordingly any text torn from its context might be used to solve a theological problem. For modern theology, authority attaches to the system of Revelation which the Scriptures made known to us but with which they are not coterminous. The determination and explication of the contents of this Revelation has been gradual and is not yet completed." This implies a very great difference, and advance, from the time Erskine first entered the lists in defence of what he, as a pioneer, considered to be the true position for the believer and the/

and the Church.

Many forces had been at work between 1818-1899, but at the fore-front of these spiritual energies there is Erskine, with his tentative outlook, and spiritual energy. Erskine, perhaps, did not realise all that is implied in the words of Professor Paterson, or the result of the spiritual energies to which he gave such an impulse, but in his efforts to quicken thought, and bring the Kingdom of God to the human heart, Erskine undoubtedly inspired others, though he may not have imitated the leaders of the Tractarian movement, as his opponents affirmed.

It is undoubted, as we have seen, that Principal Caird, in his early ministry was greatly influenced by Erskine, just as it is a historical fact that in his later years Caird was influenced by Hegelianism. As we read the biographies of the Rev. Robert Story and his son, the Principal, and those of Tulloch, of McLeod Campbell, of Dr. Norman MacLeod, of Principal Scott of Manchester, and last, but not least, that of George McDonald, the Novelist and Poet, we find the names of these men associated. Their fellowship was not that of an established school, but in their friendships there was more than a casual meeting either at Manchester or Linlathen, and each is associated with Thomas Erskine by the tie, not only of ordinary friendship but also in the bond of reverence for truth, and each testify, not simply to Erskine's search for, but to Erskine's expression of the truth with a charm of character, mysticism and saintliness, and enthusiasm that caught up others into its ambit.

One of the staunch friends of Erskine was Mr. Story of Roseneath a man of ability, and, in save a few points, in full sympathy with Erskine's line of thought. From that friendly home, in after years there came a strong and doughty recruit in the person of Story's son, who became Principal/

Principal of Glasgow University. From the first, young Story did not hide his feelings in regard to the deposition of McLeod Campbell, and that was a sore point to men in the Church of Scotland. Yet even when the mistake was acknowledged, the Church did not restore the deposed minister of Row. The strength of Story lay in the fact that he was a champion of the views of Erskine, not so much in the way of proving them, as in simply asserting that the principles for which Erskine had striven were so self-evident that there was no room for doubt. There was no playing with words, no balancing of sentences, no effort to defy the "tender" heart; with Principal Story a spade was a spade, and truth was truth, whether certain minds might be alarmed or not. That is the spirit behind his words in the memorable Assembly of 1903. "Looking through the Confession they came upon a theory of human nature, human corruption, which virtually exhibited the creation as a failure, and represented any good, that might be wrought out in man, as not the result of any effort, or desire on the part of man himself, but as mere mechanical results of superhuman power exercised upon them. The will of God was represented by the Confession of Faith as simply an arbitrary will, not actuated by moral ideas, but centring in itself, seeking its own ends - a will which held all men to lie under a sentence of death for their sins, resolved to save some from that sentence of death, as the Confession put it to the praise of God's glorious grace, and then was represented as damning others to the praise of His glorious justice; though where justice came in was hard to understand, seeing that the Confession had taught them that God, in the case of those who were condemned to everlasting torment, had withheld from them the means of grace. Was that in any sense whatever a moral idea? The whole/

whole idea of the Covenant theology was the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth century; it was legal, not  
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moral. The axis on which the system moved was Election.

The Fatherhood of God was ignored. The Fatherly love was never spoken of; it might not exist for all that was found in the theological system of the Confession of Faith".

In these words of Principal Story there is granted all that Erskine strove to reach, even the faith held by Erskine in regard to final restoration, a matter which many of those who agreed with him on most things refused to accept.

Dr. Story was one of the thirteen contributors to the "Scotch Sermons" of which he wrote two; in the 23 on Christian Righteousness he finds no satisfaction in any doctrine of Imputation or any experience of being clothed in the Righteousness of Christ, and prefers not to know anything of that Righteousness except as he sees it in Christ and in his own efforts to work out that Righteousness in life and character.

Surely the fire which Erskine kindled accounts for much, since fresh ground appeared to be left open for the further "sowing and reaping", of other workers, who were of the same spirit as Erskine.

(1) App. 10.

CHAPTER V.

What about the influence of Erskine on the other stream of religious life in Scotland, as we see that stream in the life of the Free Church, the creation of the Disruption? Perhaps it is well to note Erskine had a real sympathy with the aims, though not the methods, of that Church to reach its ends. To Erskine politics had something to do in the history of that cause. Be that as it may, it is undoubted that Erskine in the years from 1843 to 1860 found in the leaders of the Free Church opponents who had no place for his views. And yet the opposition was not one that avoided the themes which meant so much to Erskine, for, whilst not naming Erskine or his works, the sermons to be found in the "Free Church Pulpit" were evidently preached with the consciousness of such opposing forces and tendencies as those which Erskine and McLeod Campbell represented. We have, for instance, such a title to a sermon as "Grace glorified in Election" by the Rev. James Stevenson, Newton-upon-Ayr (pp. 193. Vol. 2. Free Church Pulpit). In this discourse there are these words, "Let us pause at the brink of this abyss which can never be sounded; and with the inspired apostle, reverently adore when we cannot apprehend. Why God elected, some to salvation, while He determined to leave others to themselves, when both were equally unworthy, and consequently, in so far as strict justice was concerned, the decision might have been otherwise, we cannot tell. This is the great mystery, the central difficulty, which, if it could be solved, all would be comparatively plain. But the only solution He has deigned to give is the silencing declaration - "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and whom I will I harden". In the Free Church, however, there were others who felt the reality of a more excellent way. Amongst these was the leader of the Church, Dr. Chalmers; in order to understand his position it is necessary/

necessary to look back to the years before the question of Patronage became acute. In the undivided church there were two parties, the Moderates and the Evangelicals. It would be false to history, if we accepted as the representatives of these two parties, the extreme men on either side. Perhaps this was the mistake Erskine made.

There was in Scotland, as there always has been in her religious history, another section of thinkers, made up of those whom we may call intellectuals. With two of these, Sir John Leslie, Professor of Mathematics in Edinburgh University, and Lord Rutherford, Judge of Session, Thomas Erskine was on terms of warm friendship. It is not to be wondered at that in such groupings there should arise modern heresies and criticism of orthodoxy. Among the Evangelicals was Dr. Andrew Thomson, who in face of the unprecedented circulation of Erskine's works, took up the traditional views denied by Erskine, and defended these views. There could not have been two minds more dissimilar than those of Erskine and Thomson. Erskine in his outlook on religious questions was subjective, Thomson on the other hand objective and historical. In a volume of sermons (1830) Thomson assailed the views of Erskine and had on his side the Evangelicals. In this way, the standpoint of Erskine was well-known. Thomson's crusade was supplemented by the organ of the Evangelicals "The Christian Instructor"<sup>(1)</sup>. Meanwhile, in the parish of Row, as has been seen, the views of Erskine found a capable voice and exponent in the person of McLeod Campbell. Still another recruit was found in A.J.Scott, son of Dr.Scott of Greenock, a licensed preacher of the Gospel in the Church of Scotland. Now, it was an unfounded suspicion on the part of the Evangelicals that within the Church there was the/

(1) App.3.



the counterpart of the party in the English church responsible for the Tractarian movement. Then, partly through fear and panic generated by the Gift of Tongues a strange thing happened. McLeod Campbell and his friend, A.J.Scott were cast out of the ministry and service of the Church of Scotland by a combination of the two parties hitherto opposed, i.e, the Moderates and Evangelicals. The former objected to the wholesale renunciation of works on the part of Campbell, and the latter, because he emphasised the "Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel", and these two reasons supported and clinched by the vagaries of Irving. (1) Where was Chalmers then? This is one of the aspects of conduct displayed by him most disconcerting to his biographer. Chalmers was in sympathy with some of the views of Erskine, especially those to be found in "The Unconditional Freeness". Did Chalmers shirk the issue? or was he foreseeing the religio-politico events just at hand? Was he in his silence following the line of least resistance? Was expediency his guide? Perhaps Chalmers was not one of the spirit to lead in a question of this kind. At the same time he had leanings to the new ideas.

In 1841 Chalmers, whilst continuing to be a sincerely convinced Calvinist, revised and recast the lectures which he had delivered previously in the University of Edinburgh. These lectures form Dr. Chalmer's Institutes of Theology, a posthumous work. (1) To compare these lectures with the Westminster Confession of Faith is to lay bare a great difference. Synthesis is rejected for a system of analysis. "His order", writes Dr. McCrie, "is not that of beginning with the constitution of the Godhead, of proceeding onward through the successive footsteps of a history which commences with the original purposes of the uncreated mind and terminates/

(1) App. 17a. Institutes pp.357-364. Vol. 2.

terminates in the consummation of all things. It is that which "proceeds chronologically in the natural order of human inquiry, beginning with the darkness, and the probabilities, and the wants of Natural Theology, and seeking first after these announcements that are more directly fitted to relieve the distress and to meet the difficulties of nature."

Alongside of this quotation may we not place the words of Erskine - "If the ultimate object of God's dealings with men had been to pardon their sins this might have been done without giving them any information on the subject until they stood before the judgment-seat. But if his gracious object is, as the Bible represents it, to make them partakers of His own happiness, by communicating to them His own moral likeness, it was necessary that such an exhibition of his moral character should be made to them as might convey to their understanding a distinct idea of it, and might address to their feeling of gratitude and esteem and interest, such appropriate excitements and persuasions as might lead to a clear resemblance of it."

The "Subject-Matter" of the lectures is set forth in three successive parts. The Disease for which there is a Divine remedy, the second of the Nature, and the third of the extent of the Gospel Remedy. Predestination is not discussed till the extent of the Remedy is set forth. No definition of Predestination is given; there is no effort to distinguish Election from Reprobation. What Chalmers does is to fall back on lines laid down by Lord Bacon in regard to the known and unknown, the knowable and the unknowable, from which Chalmers passes to connect Predestination in theology with that of necessity in philosophy. Science, from the side of the powers and properties of the creature/

creature, postulates philosophical necessity; theology on the other hand, from the powers and prerogatives of the Creator established philosophical necessity, which Chalmers so far as Scottish Theology is concerned describes and defines in the following words, "Scottish Theology is more profound and speculative than that of our Sister-Kingdom, and tinged throughout all its articles with the metaphysical genius of our Nation".

This was the answer of Chalmers to the contention of Erskine, who did not believe there was any avenue of hope for man in metaphysics. Erskine in a letter (Vol.II,87) (1) wrote - "The old theology is manifestly falling to pieces, and the danger is that those who attack should lose the religious spirit in the metaphysical. The true metaphysics of Christianity appear to me more and more simple. That life consists in will; and that the will of God is Eternal Life, and the selfish will of man is condemned life; and that man, by adopting the will of God, becomes a partaker of Eternal Life".

In revising his lectures, Chalmers not only touches on those aspects of theology but he also lays a new and fresh emphasis on the Doctrine of Grace. Over against the universal corruption of human nature there is a place given to virtue apart from Christianity and beyond the circle of the influence of Christianity. "There was virtue in the continence of Scipio, in the self-devotion of Regulus, in the minds of Socrates and Plato. In the present day there is a native sense of integrity and honour in many a bosom. There is felt obligation to truth. There are not merely the instinctive, but the duteous regards of kindred companionship maintained by thousands in society, not because of the popularity which rewards them, but because/

(1) App. 17.

because of the principle which enjoins them, in fulfilment of which there is the complacency of an approving, and in the transgression of which there would be the disquietude of a self-offended and therefore a reclaiming conscience".  
V.1.366

184 Again in dealing with the imputation of Adam's Sin, Chalmers would have his students not to charge men with the guilt of a transaction which took place thousands of years ago. Chalmers plead with all preachers to declare, "even under the scowl of a misunderstood theology" a full and free Gospel to all, for in no place in the Bible is pardon addressed to any man on the footing that he is one of the elect; but in all places of the Bible is addressed to every man on the footing that he is one of the species.

It cannot be said that these positions of Chalmers are the counterparts of the views of Erskine, but may we not say this, the spirit of inquiry through the writings of Erskine, did influence Chalmers to express his Calvinism in a more gracious and winsome form than was the general custom of preachers? There are certainly reservations expressed by Chalmers, but the historian of Religious Thought in Scotland is apt to feel these reservations not so satisfactory to the mind as are the blunt assertions of Erskine. Was Chalmers following the line of expediency rather than that of principle for the sake of the wider constituency of less advanced minds?

Chalmers, however, was not the only one, who in the newly formed Free Church sympathised with the wider views. The truths could not be hidden. The moderator of the Free Church in the year that Dr. Chalmers died, during the sitting of the Assembly, Dr. Sieveright<sup>(1)</sup> of Markinch, Fife, on June 6, 1847, in a Sermon preached in the Assembly Hall, Canonmills, being the Sabbath immediately after the funeral of/

(1) App.19

of the great leader said, "He (Chalmers) refused to take up traditional questions which tend to nourish suspicion and alienation among the followers of our Lord: and hence he cultivated intercourse, friendship and alliance, in the best sense, with every one holding the Divine Head and walking in the Gospel order. Strict and unyielding in things of the New Testament obligation in matters not affecting the faith and practice of a Christian man, he gave and took a large discretionary liberty larger far than hearts of less expansive charity and benevolence were inclined to commend". What Sieveright claimed for Chalmers, he himself practised, as is seen in Sieveright's "Sanctification", (Crawford, Kirkcaldy, 1880) pp.63. "If it be objected to the above method of treating the subject, that it requires men to have assurance at the very outset of their course; we may admit the imputation without the blame attached to it. It is taken for granted by numbers, that assurance is a very bad thing, an enemy to the state of sober Christianity, and a subverter of the humble Christian's peace; and that consequently the very term as well as the idea which it conveys, ought to be rejected and proscribed. But what is the assurance that our argument requires? Just what we hold in matters of human testimony, when we give it entire credit. We believe the witness of men; do the same towards God, and you have all the assurance which can be detected in the preceding remarks. We think, indeed, if one really believes in God, he may be sure he does so, on the evidence of consciousness. Does he need any other evidence as to the fact of his credence, in a matter of human testimony? And, if doubting as to the certainty of our belief, were admitted to the same extent in matters of human testimony in the affairs of ordinary life, as in matters/

matters of divine record, the business of the world would stand still. Shall we bid awakened sinners believe, and yet caution them against an assured belief of the truth proposed to them, as if diffidence here were a moral virtue? If we treat them thus no wonder that they long continue painfully unstable; fluctuating betwixt a legal confidence and a faithless despondency, without equality, comfort or moderation; and as they build, ever suspecting the foundation. When we bid the enquirer after sanctification begin with faith ..... we only require of him a persuasion of the grace of Christ, and a cordial reception of God's grace concerning the way of salvation. We bid him assured thus far; but, about any other assurance, at this stage of his progress, we need not be perplexed".

What was Sieveright's influence on religious thought? No name was more respected and his message in chaste language evangelic insight, with a great caution in regard to popular and extravagant presentations of the Gospel, was greatly appreciated in the Free Church, far beyond the bounds of the place where he lived and laboured. It was through such men that the beliefs of Erskine found their way silently and naturally into the popular mind and heart, and thus the way was prepared for a forward movement on liberal thought by that Church.

Such men, however, were in the minority, since most of the leaders of the Free Church had much of their energies turned to the practical affairs of building up a church, formed by a most unhappy trend of circumstances.

Another name in the Free Church of Scotland calls for mention, that of Dr. Hanna, the biographer of Chalmers and Editor of Erskine's Letters. In Hanna's book "The Earlier Years of our Lord", (Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1864) and "The Last Days of Our Lord's Passion", which passed into a 12th Edition, there is revealed not only the inquiring mind/

mind of the Christian historian, but also a fresh outlook and human touch which differentiates these works completely from the trend of the "Free Church Pulpit". There is undoubtedly spiritual imagination at work in Hanna's expositions. And it is not too much to say that this also is one of the charms of Erskine's writings. It may not always be imagination apart from fancy, but in the main it is imagination "in the resolute enthronement of simple truthfulness as its potentate and guide". No reader of Erskine can fail to notice how he acts on, even if he did not know the saying of Emerson - "a good symbol is the best argument and is a missionary to persuade thousands". If Erskine's aphorisms, illustrations and renderings of Scripture were put in contiguity the preacher would be in possession of a store-house of "handfuls of purpose", as Parker would express it, second to none. The word of God, moreover, encourages the spiritual and moral imagination which does for theology what historical imagination accomplishes for the historian. Hanna possessed this gift as may be seen in his Biography of Chalmers and accentuated the gift in the editorship of Erskine's Letter. Hanna's second work did not commend itself to every one in his own church, for in a complete list of contributions to Literature, Theology, etc., by ministers and laymen of the Free Church, in "Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland" by the Rev. Norman Walker, D.D., (Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, Edinburgh, 1893) there is no mention of the signal service Hanna rendered to the religious world as editor of the Letters of Erskine, and Walker's book is exhaustive - even to the casual and fleeting. The list was revised by well-known men in the Free Church, but principally by one who for long years zealously guarded the orthodoxy of the New College, Edinburgh.

Hanna as editor of the Letters notes the changes which/

which had come over the theological and religious outlook in Scotland since Erskine's day, and he leaves us in no doubt of the cause. Hanna felt the power of Erskine's influence for he himself was on the side of progress, and it is interesting to read Professor Robertson Smith's estimate of Hanna, as that opinion is quoted in the Diary of Anne Dundas of Ormiston (Miss E.H.Haldane) - (Scotsman, Jan.12, 1929)

There is no name, however, in the Free Church that emphasises the influence of Erskine on the Religious Thought of Scotland, comparable to the name of the Rev. Walter C. Smith, D.D., who closed his several ministries in the Free High Church, Edinburgh, of itself a proof that, in spite of orthodoxy, there was a leaven of progress along the lines marked out by Erskine. During his ministry in the High Church, the pulpit was the rallying point for those in sympathy with a wider catholicity of thought than was common elsewhere. That catholicity of thought did not pass unnoticed by orthodox critics. These criticisms and cases Dr. Smith weathered, and indeed defied. Those who waited on the ministry of Smith might hear at various times such men as John Caird, George McDonald, the novelist and preacher, and others who were seeking to break down barriers which had made progress almost impossible. To the expositions of Dr. Smith, there are those to-day, who owe an introduction to the modern method of dealing with Scripture. When lecturing through the Philippians and at the words, "Beware of dogs", etc., in an obiter dicta Dr.Smith said. "Tradition has it that there was a second letter to the Philippians, but it had been lost, well, if this is so, perhaps it is well that it should be lost, if it contained similar words".

Dr. Smith gathered round him many who afterwards carried his spirit into their work, and it is not too much to say that/



that whilst in the College adjoining the Free High Church, the saintly Smeaton was insisting on the interpretation of the New Testament along the most orthodox lines, Dr. Smith, week by week, from the pulpit was furnishing or supplying the antidote. That antidote was of the strongest kind, as one may gauge from the words previously quoted.

In two books "The Kingdom of God" by Professor Candlish, Cunningham Lecture, 1884 and by Professor Bruce, 1889, there are marks which point to a development of the thought of Erskine.

Candlish deals with the subject as a systematic theologian, Bruce, on the other hand, treats the matter topically; he chooses certain aspects of the subject and groups round these the relative facts revealed in the Gospels, but in this he is not the historian so much as one who thinks of Christ as not remote, but personal, one who must be interpreted along the line of sympathy. Both methods have their defects.

Candlish has shown a way whereby the richness of Divine Grace may be interpreted apart from the logician, but rather in terms of the unveiling and revealing of the love, and grace of God in Jesus Christ to all men. What Candlish does is to call attention to the seed which Erskine, long before, cast into the theological soil and to affirm there is a rich harvest, if men think of the Love of God not apart from, but with the Sovereignty of God; not Sovereignty isolated from the Divine dealings with men and so necessitated; but Love and Sovereignty together.

Professor A.B. Bruce, D.D., at p. 95 (The Kingdom of God, Bruce: T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1889) writes ... "All this was significant of a new departure. The prominence given to Faith denotes a new way of conceiving the Kingdom. "Repent", the Baptist's watchword, suits one idea of it. "Believe", Christ's watchword, suits and implies another and very different one. "Repent" is the/

the appropriate word when the Kingdom is conceived of as the reward of legal righteousness; "Believe" is the more appropriate word when the Kingdom is conceived as a gift of grace to be conferred on all who are simply willing to receive it. Alongside of these words we may place Bruce's conception of Election, "While elective in character, the new society is not vindictively conceived by the Founder. He does not mean it to be a menace against unbelief, nor will its constitution be a definite sentence of exclusion against all not immediately embraced in the ecclesia". And to the foregoing the following may be put, pp. 334, "Is the Church, in a spirit of conservatism, or timidity, or listlessness to say:- The Westminster Catechism or nothing?" p. 336: "It will not be disputed that a written creed to serve any high purpose ought to be the faithful reflection of the living earnest faith of the Church, p. 337. For this is emphatically one of those matters to which the wise observation of the late William Denny applies; "There are problems in the spiritual and social world which are like some of our metals, altogether refractory to low temperature. They will only melt with great heat, and there is no other possibility of melting them." "Whence is the needful heat to come?" asks Bruce, and the answer is not certainly from the friction of theological controversy which has rent the Church asunder into innumerable fragments, but from the central Sun of the spiritual world, dispelling with his beams the mists of ages, and shining forth once more in full effulgence."

There are other marks or proofs in the writings of Professor Bruce which show him to be in the line of succession from Erskine, and from internal evidence, in the discussion of certain topics, we are sure the works of Erskine were not unknown to Bruce. Thus in discussing the question of faith we find these words used by the Professor, words reminiscent of an oft-repeated phrase of Erskine's in regard to faith, "Reciency is the sole requirement". "External conditions/

conditions have no place in reference to the inner light". "It is one thing to make the Christian consciousness judge of the truth of Scripture teaching, quite another to make it judge of its comparative value". "Surely it is not presumptuous to claim for faith the power to discern, that the doctrine of the incarnation is of more importance than a doctrine based on texts, concerning the exact constitution of Christ's person; or that the fact that Christ died for our sins is of more moment than any theory of atonement claiming for itself Scripture support? Not only may the Christian mind distinguish between doctrines at once as to certainty, and as to importance, but it must". (The Chief End of Revelation p.p.289.)

How far-seeing in spiritual things Erskine was we can estimate, when we recognise the great theme, "The Fatherhood of God" as set forth by him is practically the stand-point of modern theology. Erskine, in his effort to mitigate the harshness of the Divine Sovereignty, or to put that doctrine in its true perspective, often referred to the sufferings of the Father in His expression of the contents of the Divine Fatherhood. Bruce has the same thought in the words ... "When Christ is regarded as a Divine Being entering into humanity with a redeeming purpose in His heart, we then see in God a Being subjected to sorrow by human sins, and compelled by the instincts and yearnings of His love to become a burden-bearer to His own creatures". And through such a view of God alone do we begin to comprehend what a revelation of grace means. The attitude of Erskine in regard to sacrifice in the Old Testament as a preparation for the New Testament is summed up in another quotation from Professor Bruce, ("The Chief End of Revelation," Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1890) pp.100. "The lesson on sacrifice was also a remarkable manifestation of grace, for while it negatively revealed the/

the humanity of the Divine character, it positively revealed God's delight in self-sacrifice, and thus brought to light possibilities of sacrifice for God Himself, which one would hardly dare to regard even as possibilities until they actually had been realised". Again, could the aspirations of Erskine be more fittingly expressed than by the following words from the same book, pp. 306? "The hope of the future seems to lie neither in a creedless church nor in a church clinging superstitiously to all traditional dogmas, but in a church which has the will and wisdom to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential in religious belief, between Catholic Christian certainties and matters of doubtful disputation; in other words, between doctrine of faith and theological dogmas". These words were penned, if not under the inspiration of Erskine, at least they belong to a common atmosphere.

Erskine stated the principle of the Natural Law in the Spiritual World long before the idea was worked out by others, such as Professor Henry Drummond.<sup>(1)</sup> To Erskine the idea may have come in his study of Butler's Analogy, written at a time when the facts and outlook of science were meagre and dim in comparison with the present. Drummond was a man with qualities of character not unlike those possessed by the seer of Linlathen. They both had a consciousness of the overwhelming love of God and were possessed of a boundless charity. Their attitude towards creeds and confessions was of the same spirit. Erskine and Drummond were men whose life was a witness to the adage - Character is more important than creeds.

There is no evidence that Professor Drummond was familiar with the writings of Erskine, but these furnished Drummond with a series of articles which were to be published/

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published in book-form. That title was "The Natural Law in the Spiritual World". Erskine interpreted the natural by the spiritual and perhaps advanced too far in that direction; at any rate no one can fail to perceive, if not identify, a similarity in principle, i.e., continuity and practice between the laws of the Spiritual and Natural World. There was, however, one law which Drummond considered had been overlooked by Darwin and his followers. What was the law? We can best understand this law in its contrast as expressed in the oft-quoted words:-

"Nature red in tooth and claw with ravine".

To Drummond, however, this was but a one-sided representation of nature and also of the first Cause - God - the Creator at the back of nature, and so he pointed out that even in nature there was the struggle for the life of others - or self-sacrifice. Nature then was not fate; to the dark cloud there was a silver lining. What led Drummond to emphasise that fact? What led Erskine to the Fatherhood of God? Was it not that Erskine condemned the idea of Election because his heart revolted at the conception; and what his heart so condemned could not be right or of God? In the same way, may it not be said that Drummond found in his own experience a dislike to the idea of tooth and claw, and therefore could not conceive it true of the Creator, and, by that gift of intuition given to the pure in heart, saw what the wise and the expert failed to take into account?

Another writer, within the same church as Drummond, has emphasised the moral and spiritual teaching of Erskine, Dr. George Steven, whose "Psychology of the Christian Soul" does systematically what Erskine taught in the various works which came from his pen. The term 'educative process' is one /

one often in the writings of Erskine, as well as in writings of those in sympathy with him. Indeed, it may be said to express one of his fervours, as Professor Masson would have put it. Steven (The Psychology of the Christian Soul, Hodder and Stoughton, London) at pp. 5 uses the same terms in brackets, and affirms "The religion of Jesus Christ .... an educative process". Then follows one of the latest expositions of the position of Erskine. "God does not conceive of us as rebels, though we do rebel, nor as His servants, although it is our honour to obey, but as friends, as sons whom He woos and wins, that He may open up to us all His thoughts and purposes. This soul of ours is to be trained up into the knowledge of the highest; the information we receive, the ideas given us from the spiritual inheritance of the race, are to form a personality; and the restraint we need will come according to the method of Christ, from the encouragement and fostering in the heart of the Divine life He has Himself bestowed upon us in our very constitution".

Steven also in his description of conscience falls into line with Erskine's view. "Men," he says, "describe it as reason, or the witness of God". Erskine is even more daring at times, for he held that conscience in each man is the Christ or God Himself in each man. Again, Steven affirms, "Men describe conscience as the inner light, or the divine spark". "Conscience", says Erskine, "is the still, small voice", or, again, Erskine puts it, "Conscience is the presence of God's light and life and love". "Wherever men meet", says Steven, "young or old, learned or ignorant, they are to be found busy judging themselves or their neighbours by a standard of right or wrong. It is in the deepest sense ourselves, though the light be dim and the germ unsprung". Compare this with Erskine's words: "The instrument of Judgment is the conscience. We judge ourselves/

ourselves by the conscience of others also, and conscience is that which is holy in us". Steven at pp.11, writes: "We approve or disapprove of ourselves - that is the divine nature in the heart of men". "It may be neglected, forgotten or dead; many may deny they have it, mock at it as a mere survival of an out-worn creed, but, as Carlyle says, "There is an Infinite; and we shall see this infinite, seemingly dead and buried, can yet rise into the most potent and revolutionary activity. Without its presence personality of any kind would be impossible; indeed it is the very core of character". On the same lines Erskine writes, "Persons professing Christianity often speak of the natural conscience, as they call it, disrespectfully and yet all the true Christianity that ever finds a place in man's heart must enter that door. What they mean to condemn is the misjudgment, which a man, whilst he still lives in the flesh, forms of what the voice speaks within him. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. This is the retribution that is continually going on in a man's life which rests on the fact of his really possessing a capacity to take part with and yield himself, either to the Spirit of God or to the spirit of darkness. The great thing is to identify duty and conscience hourly with God".

Erskine rejected both forms of Pelagianism. To him there was neither fatalism in man's will nor was it a fact that the work of grace began on man's side, when man knocks and God opens the door. The other form in which man's will is defined in the work of grace is, God works and man adds his power and brings the balance to be on the side of grace. This, as Dr. Steven asserts, assumes "That in man there is a spiritual power separate and different from the spirit of God. There are two sources of power, a man's spiritual power and God's supernatural power." The blessings of grace to Erskine were like the gifts of sunlight. The light is/

is there as God's free gift, and all we have to do is to open our eyes to the influences thereof. Or, again, Erskine says, "The spiritual life in the soul springs up out of despair of all created help"; and writing to Lord Rutherford he puts it in another form, "There surely is a light and strength somewhere in an ocean-fountain; the scanty rills of them we find in ourselves seem to indicate an infinite source from whence they come, and it is pleasant to find that source a personal Being - a Father - a Friend in whom we may trust, to whom we may pour out our heart". Again, "The will of God in man's being - his true element out of which his spirit sickens and dies that, as a water-plant can only thrive and have its true liberty in the will of God". With all this, Dr. Steven agrees, and the illustration he adopts is one that would have delighted Erskine, for in Steven he would have his own thoughts revealed. "In the presence of a glorious sunset what does the artist contribute from his own soul to produce the rapture which he experiences at the sight? He sees the beauty, he opens his soul to it, he receives it, dwells on it, delights in it, glories in it, is carried away by it. It is for him not to create or even add to this splendour, but to recognise and accept; his attitude is wholly receptive. It is not there apart from him. To him it does not exist unless he has the faculty divine; but his faculty, divine though it be, does not make or increase the beauty of the scene. In a similar way we conceive the place of man in the larger world of spirit. We cannot create, or add to it; we can only recognise it, open our heart to it, receive it. There is no spiritual power but in God. The well of water springing up /



up within us is His Spirit, given at first, increased from time to time through the working of this spirit in the lives and writings of men, and made permanent at last by the appearing of Christ, and our conscious accepting of Him and His Holy Spirit".<sup>(1)</sup> And very fittingly there follows the quotation from The Spiritual Order by Thomas Erskine, in his criticism of the Genevese Liturgy.... pp.240.

(1) App. 33,34.

C H A P T E R      V I .

Alongside the broadening of truth and religious thought in Scotland so far as the study and theological schools were concerned, there was a popular movement of the same broadening nature. This movement owed its origin and progress to writers whose works, although well-known in their day, are now seldom read. In these works there is set forth the problems and difficulties that once greatly exercised the popular mind. Here again we meet with the same theme which touched the heart and influenced the mind of Erskine. The Scottish people have always had a propensity and genius for theology, and, though in the Creed, and Confession of the Church in Scotland there prevailed more of the spirit of Calvinism than that of Luther, yet among the ordinary people there was, if not a broader outlook, at least encouragement given to those who favoured breadth. Dr. Norman MacLeod was probably the first to bring into Scottish preaching, in its popular sense, the winsomeness and humanity which the severer forms of Calvinism did not tolerate. He might not be so definite as Erskine in his words, but MacLeod touched the imagination in a way that the godly man of Linlathen could not do. MacLeod's attitude on the Sabbath question did much to banish the rigours of the Lord's Day as Scottish people regarded it, and in that crusade Erskine was sympathetic. Erskine's religion had a breadth about it, for was it not a revelation answering to all that was best, noblest, divine and winsome in man's life? It is that aspect of religion which we find in the writings of MacLeod, whether we turn to the answers he writes for the benefit of inquiring correspondents or to sermons preached, or to "The Starling" or the geniality of his heart behind the incident when, as a young minister in Loudon, he was asked by the godly woman whom he was visiting to "gan ower the fundamentals". (1) Writing to/

(1) App. 9.

to a friend he asks, "Is a Christian not entitled to draw lessons of conduct from natural religion interpreted or revealed? May he not study final causes in his moral constitution." To another he writes, "How exquisitely does Christ point to nature linking the world without to the world within! p.102. Life, London, Isbester and Co. 1876. MacLeod is in fellowship with Erskine when on pp. 155 MacLeod writes: "If Christ did not die for all men - in what sense is He said to be the Saviour of all men and specially of those that believe? If Christ did not die for all men how can all men be commanded to believe? What are they to believe? Is that not inviting to a supper insufficient to feed the guests if they came? If it is said God knows they won't come, I reply, this is charging God with conduct man would be ashamed of. If He died that men may live yet won't believe, this is moral guilt, not natural inability. (It is the guilt of the drunkard, who cannot give up drinking: not the guilt of the man without legs who cannot walk, which is not guilt at all". Writing in his Journal, pp.279, vol. 1, while still at Dalkeith, he says, "What precise relation does revelation bear to me which is not actually a revelation - a making known to me, or in other words, which is not recognised by me as true? Do I believe any spiritual truth in the Book, except in so far as I see it to be true in Conscience and Reason? Is my faith in the outward revelation not in exact proportion to my inward perception of the truth uttered in the letter? Where is the difference between assenting to the Principia of Newton, because written by a great mathematician and not because I see them to be true, and my assenting to the Bible, because written by inspired men and not because I see how truly they spake? Can any revelation coming from without be so strong as a revelation from spirit to spirit? Could any amount of outward authority be morally sufficient to/

to make me hate a friend or do any action I felt to be morally wrong while apprehending it to be wrong? It might correct me as to facts which depend entirely upon testimony and not upon spiritual truth". Again, at p. 281 we find the statement made that the map of Australia becomes clearer as the country becomes colonised... thus it is with the Bible. What progress is being made in the discovery of its meaning! How better acquainted is the Church of Christ now with its spirit, its allusions, its inner and outer history than the same church during any former period? At pp. 282, "Christ's love is not his life, death, resurrection, ascension, promises. It is that in which they all live, move and have their being; and my faith in His love is a higher thing than faith in anything whereby He manifests it. It is faith in Himself - in what He is and not merely in what he does". Again on pp. 289 he writes, "Nothing outward in government, creed or mode of worship can satisfy the increasing hunger in the Church; all are seeking something which they find not, yet know not what they seek. I think that something is unity. But of what kind? Nothing can satisfy but one - unity of mind with Christ and so with one another. I hope the breakings up in Protestantism may lead to it. There is another thing presses itself upon me. I know as surely as I know anything, that all my sin has emanated from myself and yet I do believe God has brought more good to me in the latter end of this very life than could perhaps have been brought in any other way". In Vol. II, pp. 137, "It is not enough you believe in Christ's life and death as an atonement as revealing God's love, as that without which there is no pardon for sin, as that by which we are reconciled to God. They will tell you that you deny this atonement unless you believe that Christ on the cross endured the punishment which was due to each sinner of the elect for whom He died; which/

which thank God, I don't believe, as I know He died for all the world". At pp. 148, "Let us be careful not to admit through oversight one sentence which ought to pain a Christian however weak he be;" pp. 231, "You have no right to blame your natural disposition. By doing so you blame God who gave it to you. No quality is bad unless perverted; pp.321, B&Moral, Oct.1871... "I preached extempore on "Our Father which art in Heaven" and on the education of men beyond the grave. I fear I shocked not a few - I hope I did so for good."

There is another name which must ever be associated with the religious thought of Scotland-the name of George Macdonald, preacher, poet and novelist. We have already seen how kindred spirits, in the various churches came together, not for the purpose of forming any distinct society, as was the case in the Oxford Movement. The name of George MacDonald must not be omitted from the list. At various times we find MacDonald, Principal Scott,<sup>(1)</sup> Story, and Tulloch under the same roof in an informal association. With Erskine MacDonald seems only to have had some slight personal acquaintance, but with Erskine's outlook on religious things MacDonald was in complete sympathy, which passed into admiration; (Life of MacDonald, Johnson, Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd. London, 1906), pp.24/25.

Of MacDonald's work his biographer writes, "MacDonald has been pre-eminently the teacher of broader, truer and more spiritual ideas of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man. He has uplifted the doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement from formal material statements into living and reasonable factors of the Christian Creed. He has popularised profound aspects of truth for those who know little about dogmatic theology." "What A.J.Scott, MacLeod Campbell, Thomas Erskine, F.D.Maurice taught to the/

(1) App. 30.

the few, he has made plain and large to the many that he who runs may read and discover for himself." pp.80.

In those modern days of newspapers it seems almost impossible to believe that such a novel as Robert Falconer could have appeared in the popular press, but it was so issued to the readers of the Glasgow Weekly Mail in the early sixties. Whilst then in the Churches there was taught from the majority of pulpits the old Calvinism and often the severer form of that doctrine, from week to week the press helped to undo the work of the Sabbath.

MacDonald's works though now little known had a large circulation, and keeping in mind the adage, the press supplies what the people desire, we can see in a way how Scottish Religious thought was being moulded, and helped, and prepared for the changes, which latterly became the setting given by the several churches, in the form of Declaratory Acts, as to what was implied in the substance of their faith. MacDonald finds, it would seem, from his writings, what Maurice confessed he found in The Brazen Serpent, a mine of moral and spiritual wealth. In Robert Falconer MacDonald gives expression to some popular estimates of religious facts, which by no means were orthodox to the men of the Confession and Shorter Catechism. At pp. 42 of Robert Falconer - (Bradbury Evans and Co. Whitefriars, London) that hero says in regard to rules of syntax that "These are as useless as the task set himself by a worthy lay-preacher in the neighbourhood - of learning the first nine chapters of the First Book of the Chronicles in atonement for having in an evil hour of freedom of spirit, ventured to suggest that such lists of names, even although forming a portion of Holy Writ, could scarcely be reckoned of equally divine authority with St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans!" In the Prayer of the mother/

mother of Andrew Falconer, the father of Robert Falconer we have the key which opened for Erskine and MacDonald a door into a place of larger liberty and hope ... "My ain Andrew! To think o' my bairnie that I cairrit i' my ain body, that sookit my breists, and leuch i' my face, to think o' im bein' a reprobate! O Lord, couldna he be eleckit yet? Is there nae turnin' o' Thy decrees? Na, na, that wadna do at a'. But while there's life there's houp. Gladly wud I luik upon's deid face gin I cud believe that his sowl wasna among the lost. But eh! the torments o' that place! and the reik that gangs up ever an' ever smoorin' the stars." pp. 44.

MacDonald at pp. 77 of Robert Falconer gives expression to the objections of Erskine in regard to ultra-Calvinism... "And he must believe, too, that God was just, awfully just, punishing with fearful pains those who did not go through a certain process of mind which it was utterly impossible they should go through, a help which He would give to some, and withhold to others, the reason of the difference not being such, to say the least of it, as to come within the reach of the persons concerned."

Hence it was even in justification of God himself that a party arose to say that a man could believe without the help of God at all, and after believing only began to receive God's help - a heresy all but as dreary and barren as the former." pp. 78, Robert Falconer.

MacDonald sets forth some of the popular forms of reasoning among the ordinary people who thought for themselves apart from creeds or pulpits; and anyone with a knowledge of present day Scottish Church life and character will know what George MacDonald heard in his day, is not uncommon/



uncommon still ... pp. 81, Robert Falconer... "But it'll be sair upo' them to sit there (Heaven) sitin and drinkin' and talkin' awa', an' enjoyin' themselves, when ilka noo an, than there'll come a soundh o' wailin up frae the ill place, an' a burnin' ill to bide. I call up ilk ane o' ye 'at has a frien' or a neighbour down yonner to rise up an' taste nor bite nor sup mair till we gang up a 'thgither to the fut o' the throne and pray the Lord to lat's gang and du as the Maister afore's and beir their griefs and cairry their sorrows doon in hell there, gin it may be that they may repent and get remission o' their sins, an' come up here wi' us at the lang last, an' sit doon wi's at this table, a' throuw the merits o' oor Saviour, Jesus Christ, at the heid o' the table there. Amen."

Jonathon Edwards defended and asserted the sovereignty of God at the expense of humanity. Over against this may be placed the teaching of MacDonald, Erskine, McLeod Campbell and Bishop Ewing, in all of whom the God consciousness is supreme. These men arrived at their position of modified Calvinism in a natural and not transcendental way as Edwards. Man had his place in the scheme of things because humanity is endowed with the gift of direct vision into divinity. This aspect of the theological position appears in the prayer of the elder Falconer's mother, "Eh, gin the Lord wad only tak' me, and let him gang. Can the heart of a mother be greater in love than the heart of God." The lack of human feelings in the extreme Calvinistic position, and a position, too, asserted by McChayne in its most lurid form addressed to children, is encountered at pp. 91 of Robert Falconer.. "Yet God had given His first to save His brethern; how could He be pleased, that she should dry her tears and be comforted. True, some awful unknown force of a necessity, with/

with which God could not cope came in to explain it; but this did not make God more kind, for He knew it all every time He made a man." One of Erskine's assertions that Calvinism as understood in his early days was not other than a hindrance to the progress of the Kingdom of God. MacDonald emphasises this in the following words. pp.175 of Robert Falconer.... "It was one thing to give bread to eat, another to give music and gladness. No music but that which sprung from effectual calling and the perseverance of the saints could be lawful in a world that was under the wrath and curse of God ..... 179,"But, man, Robert, dinna ye think the minister was sair upo' me? Robert could think of nothing but the Prodigal Son, which he read, and the souter as he listened broke out - I tell't ye sae! Not a word about the puir lad's sins! It was a' a hurry and a scurry to get the new shune upo' him, an' win at the calfie, an' the fiddlin', an' the dancin' .... for the Spirit of God lies all about the spirit of man like a mighty sea, ready to rush in at the smallest chink in the walls that shut Him out from His own - walls which even the tone of a violin afloat on the wind of that Spirit is sometimes enough to rend from battlement to base, as the blast of the ram's horns rent the walls of Jericho", pp. 251. "The best that a miracle can do is to give hope; of the objects of faith it can give no proof; one spiritual testimony is worth a thousand of them. For to gain the sole proof of which these truths admit; a man must grow into harmony with them. He had ever one anchor of the soul and he found it held, the faith of Jesus (I say the faith of Jesus, not his own faith in Jesus) the truth of Jesus". pp. 306, Robert Falconer.

George MacDonald, even more so than Norman MacLeod, was/

was in full harmony with the spirit of Erskine, and all through his novels as well as in his unspoken sermons there is the set purpose to overturn the same obstacles which Erskine found in the way of the Gospel. How true to the teaching of Erskine are the words from Alec Forbes, pp. 120; "But it is our divine aspirations, and not our intellectual theories that need to be carried out. The latter may, nay must, in some measure perish; the former will be found in perfect harmony with the divine Will; yea, true though faint echoes of that Will, echoes from the unknown caves of our deepest humanity, where lies yet swathed in darkness the divine image". And at pp. 203-4 of the same book we meet with two of Erskine's themes ... "For where there is a religious experience it will now and then crack the prisoning pitcher, and let some brilliant ray of the indwelling glory out, to discomfit the beleaguering hosts of troublous thoughts" .... "It is not by driving away our brother that we can be alone with God. The love of the brethren opens the door into God's chamber, which is within ours".

MacDonald, more than any other writer, has caught up the mystical in Erskine's writings, especially as Erskine's form of mysticism is manifestly apparent in the Brazen Serpent. For our purpose, however, the works of MacDonald explain, in a measure, how it was that in all the churches there developed a spirit of tolerance, the open mind and hospitality towards new views of religious facts, a spirit that has given to Scottish Religious Thought its present position and outlook.

One other writer remains to be noted. We have seen how Walter C. Smith, as a theologian within the limits of the creed of the church which he served, did much to help on the work of broadening and deepening the river of religious/

religious thought in Scotland. One other part of his contribution remains to be studied. He, too, like MacDonald did much to popularise religious thought, In his Jubilee Sermon he spoke as one who was carefully weighing his words, though conscious of the fact that his church had advanced somewhat, for if not, why was he of all men chosen to be Moderator of Assembly in that memorable year? Smith was, however, not only a theologian, but a poet and though his poems to modern readers may not be known even by name, yet his various poetical works issued during the period 1847-1892, with the exception of Ballads from Scottish History, incorporated in the Poetical Works of W.C.Smith, 1892, went to a third, and one to a fourth edition; and these writings Professor Moffat believes did much to humanise Scottish Theology. (The Presbyterian Churches) pp.162. What was the trend of these poems? In the same line as the novels of George MacDonald, whom in some respects Smith surpassed in his thought concerning Eternal Punishment. I have said Smith in some ways was more advanced than MacDonald in a poem on pp.175 (The Poetical Works of W.C.Smith, J.M.Dent & Co. 1892, London), there is the following enlargement of the idea referred to on pp.81, Robert Falconer, and already quoted.

"I had a brother, and also another  
Whom I loved well;  
What if in anguish they curse each other  
In depths of hell?  
And the angels all were silent.

And He said, Now will I go with you,  
Dear child of love,  
I am weary of all this glory, too,  
In heaven above,  
And the angels all were silent.

We will go seek and save the lost,  
If they will hear,  
They who are worst and need Me most,  
And all are dear.  
And the angels all were silent.

MacDonald/

MacDonald in the works quoted did not carry out the idea of rescue to its logical conclusion, as Smith does, inasmuch as the latter shows the Exalted Saviour going with sorrowing saints to redeem and restore.

One of Erskine's saying was, there is nothing irretrievable with God. This, though Smith expresses it in another form, - the manner - is true to the type.

"Idle? their doom is fixed? Ah? who can tell?  
Yet were it so, I think no harm could well  
Come of my prayer.....  
Who shall forbid the heart's desire to, flow  
Beyond the limit of the things we know." pp. 501

Erskine had many a tilt with the term "Imputation" and so had Miss Bella Japp. pp.257:

"I've gone to Kirk  
Sixty years now since first with Jenny, nurse;  
And what a work  
I've heard them make about the Fall and Curse.  
Imputed sin,  
Imputed right, imputed everything;  
Meanwhile within  
The devil, who had us in his grips, sings  
Impute away, that's just the way to bring  
My bairns in."

Scattered through the poem there is manifested a very decided sympathy with the teaching of Erskine. Smith was one of those in the church, who allowed his humanity to conquer his creed which had long outlasted its day. I have mentioned MacDonald in comparing the musings of Smith with others, not only because of a similarity of sentiment and spirit, but also for another fact, the appearance of MacDonald in the pulpit of the Free High Church, Edinburgh, to tell men of the Divine Fatherhood, with tenderness and mysticism - a Fatherhood deprived of the terrors of Calvinism, and arrayed in the love of the Cross; and yet Calvinism was there in a new garb to many - even that mystical element which had been lost in the endeavour to stifle the idea.

That was his test for every thought - "Will it lift you/

you up nearer to God or not?" pp.507, A. Heretic.

A short anthology of the poems of Smith in regard to Erskine's teaching is at least evidence that these two writers travelled over the same ground, and both had the same friends, with this bond, admiration for the seer of Linlathen.

Erskine would have been in agreement with the words from Olrig Grange.

"But in the crucible of thought  
Old forms dissolve, nor have I got,  
Or seem to wish, new moulds of clay  
To limit the boundless truth I sought," pp.46.

"Too dear, indeed, to part with Faith  
For forms of logic, about God." pp.47.

Sir David Lyndesay of The Mount gave some shrewd blows for the Reformed Faith, and though Smith lacked the vigour of Lyndesay, yet in his own winsome way he also helped Scottish Religious Thought to a fresh and better understanding of Scriptural Truth.

"And in the ancient truth he sees  
But an old bunch of rusty keys,  
Hung at the belt of the orthodox,  
To open the dungeon which they call Peace," pp.53.

"But all through life I see a Cross,  
Where sons of God yield up their breath;  
There is no gain except by loss,  
There is no life except by death,  
And no full vision but by Faith.  
Nor glory but by bearing shame,  
Nor Justice but by taking blame;  
And that Eternal Passion saith,  
'Be emptied of glory and right and name.'" pp.86.

"Ye buried your Lord in a creed  
Dark as the Golgotha tomb, and here  
He lay dead indeed;" pp.179.

of the future of Judas Iscariot:-

"Leave thy burden with me, Satan  
He is not too bad for me; He will get his own  
place duly  
And it is not mine to be  
A breaker of the bruised,  
Or the judge of such as he." pp.191.

In Luke Sprott, Evangelist, we have the popular notion of the atonement.

"But/

"But he was sure of all things in earth  
and hell and heaven,  
Sure that we were devil's children all,  
And heirs of wrath to come,  
Sure that on the bitter cross a sum  
Of ransom had been given  
To purchase men from Satan  
Or at least to purchase some." pp. 195.

"You build an ugly barn, which you  
Call a Kirk, and then  
One preaches in Geneva gown to men predestinate  
This to go down into the pit with all  
His virtues fair,  
And that with all his sins to pass to  
Heaven with heart elate.  
And the ransomed sing the praises  
Of that grace inscrutable,  
And your angels tune their harps  
To that monstrous sovereignty." pp. 204.

W.C.Smith, in all his poems, has before him the often unspoken thoughts of men in regard to those principles which Erskine had set forth to the few - at least in his later years. As it was the pride of the Scottish home to provide at least one of its members for the work of the ministry, so throughout the long story of Religious Thought in Scotland there were among the common people thinkers who had thoughts in regard to the principles of the Kingdom of God which, although not expressed in the language of the schools, reached down to the inwardness of the Gospel message. The unordained preacher, therefore, is not lacking an audience.

"For oft the Church must learn from those without  
Who paste the prophet - broadside on  
Its walls  
Or sing their burden on the busy street." pp.247.

In Dick Dalgleish, pp.309, we have some of the thoughts of the common people.

"The Son of the Carpenter, now, He was wise  
In the old town of Nazareth long ago.  
We are not very pious, we workmen, I fear,  
Don't go much to church, but we read about Him;  
And the things that we read are not quite what we  
hear  
The ministers blow off like froth from the brim  
Of a pot of small beer.  
Nay, I don't blame the preacher;  
It's just what we want that we find in our books;  
As the sun is a painter, and a bleacher  
To others; it is as the eye is that looks;  
You open the door to which you have the key,  
And/

And I find the message God meant for me."  
pp.309-10.

Another form of expressing the more sedate, laboured style of one of Erskine's thoughts or fervours is found in Raban, pp.236.

"So in all faiths there is something true,  
Even when bowing to stock or stone -  
Something that keeps the Unseen in view  
Beyond the stars, and beyond the blue,  
And notes His gifts with the worship due.  
For where the spirit of man has gone  
A-groping after the Spirit Divine,  
Somewhere or other it touches the throne,  
And sees a light that is seen by none,  
But who seek Him that is sitting thereon.  
Seek but provision of bread and wine,  
High-ceiled house, and heaps of gold.

And nothing of God shall e'er be thine.  
But who seeks Him, in the dark and cold,  
With heart that elsewhere finds no rest,  
Some fringe of the skirts of God shall hold,  
Though round His spirit the mists may fold,  
With eerie shadows, and fears untold."pp.236.

The change which came over the Religious Thought in Scotland, so far as the ordinary mind, and even the outlook of the clergy in Scotland, may be judged from the contents of such a book as Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk, (W.Alexander, L.L.D., Edinburgh, David Douglas, 1908) - a book which gives a true description of the times to which it refers, 1843. In it we have with all its pawkiness a sombre and vivid representation of religious life and thought, when the ordinary mind was held in thral to the doctrines against which Erskine waged a continual warfare. To compare these days with the change which had come to the religious life and thought of Scotland in 1870 is like going from darkness into light. This alteration of affairs is the monument of Erskine the pioneer through his books and other writings, enlarged in thought and expression by men, who, in many ways, acknowledge the inspiration of Thomas Erskine.



C H A P T E R     V I I .

Towards the latter part of Erskine's life other problems than those of The Internal Evidence, Election, Fatherhood, Faith and The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel were beginning to exercise the minds of men. The methods of science were now brought to bear on the history of revelation, or on history set forth in the Bible, on the one hand, and on the other the very words of Scripture were subjected to a scientific criticism and examination by scholars, either in the spirit of reverent criticism, or in the spirit of those who say let the word perish that truth may remain. Erskine was aware of this criticism, but he had not the equipment for the task or for such a minute inquiry, even if he had the will and strength. He was not afraid of the spirit of inquiry. Perhaps he trembled more for the sake of weaker brethren than for the ark of the covenant. He was zealous for the security of the simple believer's faith, just as he had been in the exposition of his own faith, in universal restoration. This he makes very clear in his letter to Bishop Colenso. And yet Erskine has a very distinct place as a pioneer in this spirit of enquiry. Biblical Criticism in this country has one great outstanding landmark in what is known as "The Robertson Smith Case", which agitated the Free Church, and in the agitation revealed latent forces and opinions in regard to Biblical truths, which few expected had taken such a hold on clergy and laity in all the churches. The Robertson Smith Case in 1881 made known to the world a fact, i.e. that in the orthodox and evangelic Free Church of Scotland there were many ministers, and more laymen, who read and understood the Bible in a sense not known to those who were leaders of thought before 1843, and for many years after that date. Why was this? Forces were at work, silent penetrative, scholarly/

scholarly and patient. One of these forces was the influence of Thomas Erskine. For the first time in 1877 there was given to readers and students in Scotland one of the choicest books in the literature and religion of Scotland, "Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen." (Hanna, Douglas, 1877). This book made known to those deeply interested in the new spirit of criticism the attitude of one not afraid to bring common-sense, and reason to bear on the Word of God; and this outlook was allied to a faith evangelical, winsome, considerate of weaker men, and a Christian experience which had grown out of the practice of the presence of God in the heart, a heart that willed to do the will of God and so learned of the doctrine whether it is of God. This was not a new fact to many of the leaders of thought in all the churches. Freedom of thought, joined to a blameless life, is a great and powerful influence. Erskine was a peer in this respect.

Two attitudes towards the Bible revealed themselves in the Robertson Smith case. One was to read the Bible in the light of the 17th century and the other to study the Bible in the light of the wider knowledge of the 19th century. How did Erskine express that wider knowledge? In Miss Wedgwood's Journal and from Professor Lorimer's efforts to get Erskine's opinions on some sheets of a volume on the Inspiration of Scripture by Dr. John Muir, who endowed the Sanscrit chair in the University of Edinburgh. pp.159 and 212 of Letters, Vol.2. To Miss Wedgwood Erskine said, "I think we shall learn to value the Bible more as we grow independent of it. I do value parts of the Bible exceedingly, but I do not feel that I depend upon it. The Bible was a divine revelation in a different sense than any supposed revelation of the gods, and it was no accident that it came to men through a nation less enlightened than pagan nations." In regard to the human/

human element in the Bible, Erskine said, "But when I come to discrepancies in the narratives, which are very definite and striking, neither can I ignore them, and I feel this is not inspiration. The records are the vehicle of principles which are true independently of the records and which criticism cannot touch. Yes, we cannot crush it (criticism), we must accept it. But the object of criticism is that which is variable. The object of faith is that which is unchanging, which is true being. Now I have no difficulty in receiving the fact of miracle. But if anyone has, I do not conceive that he is thereby debarred from entering into the spirit of Christianity. The one is a fact, the other is a principle. The two things can never come into collision with each other." Again, Erskine says, "I look upon Christianity as the revelation of reciprocity, of the passive side of the character of God. I can conceive that the first preachers of Christianity understood this very incompletely. Paul, what a noble, heroic figure that was! And yet we see that to him one great idea is the breaking down of the partition wall between Jew and Gentile." Miss Wedgwood asked Erskine how he would look at the mere records of Christianity and to this he answered, "Though we must, of course, approach that narrative just like any other, yet to my feeling Christianity itself has more analogy with natural science than history. It is a revelation independent of facts." On another occasion Erskine said, "The Jew was taught to recognise a righteous God. He was no better than his neighbours: in many ways he was worse. A Greek David would not have committed his crimes. But he recognised the righteous Being as they did not. How much sin there is in those bequests of David to his son (the execution of Shimei, etc.), but yet, if we turn to the Psalms, this same man acknowledges God, knows/

knows God, as the purer moral natures do not. And in the same way the Bible is given to us to help to know God. We may know the Bible and not God, we may know God and not the Bible, but this is its aim; rightly used it cannot fail of this." He said, "That certainly an infallible book was just the same kind of evil as an infallible church." To all these sayings of Erskine may be put the reason why he deprecated the issue of Colenso's book, "I do not feel myself justified in saying anything by merely knowing that it is true; I feel bound to look to its probable effects on those who hear it." To Professor Lorimer Erskine wrote, "It seems to me most important to understand the place which the Scriptures really occupy, that we make the use of them which they were intended to serve, and be delivered from any superstitious feelings about them. This is specially needed here in Scotland, where a belief in the Bible is often substituted for faith in God, and a man is considered religious, not because he walks with God in his spirit, but because he acknowledges and maintains the verbal inspirations of the sacred canon."

There is, in these views of the divine word, something of the outlook of Coleridge, but it is certain that Erskine owed little to Coleridge for *The aids to Reflection* was published several years after *The Remarks on the Internal Evidence*, *The Essay on Faith*, and *The Unconditional Freedom*, in all of which there is set forth in a tentative way the attitude of Erskine towards the Canon of Scripture. To Erskine from the first the Bible was no fetish, but only the human medium by which the Divine Spirit had sought to communicate the mind and will of God to the human soul: in the Word was the supernatural seen very specially in the choice of a particular people through whom the words of life had been communicated.

Erskine's/

Erskine's position in regard to Revelation may also be estimated by his method of dealing with the Bible. He refused to supplant reason by blind faith; he would not set aside common-sense in his estimation of the truth, even though scriptural; and where either commonsense or reason had too large drafts made on them he did not hesitate to question the correctness of the sacred writer. Moreover, Erskine, in his search to get near the nerve of revelation, again and again gives his own translation, and as we have already hinted, sometimes in the exuberance of faith in a principle he even makes scripture bend to his theory. Not that Erskine did this in a wilful spirit, for he was too sincere in his methods, but as the love of God to him was the greatest thing in the world, so to him Scripture must set forth that supremacy; perhaps, at times Erskine in his crusade did not always see the other side of the shield, though no one strove so hard as he did to be fair at the balance. Now, just because of this attitude towards Scripture, Erskine established himself as a pioneer of Biblical criticism, and when his Letters were published the book just anticipated one of the great conflicts in the Scottish Church, for it was a conflict in which all the churches in the land had an influence or a part. The Robertson Smith Case was not merely a Free Church conflict, for in all the Churches sides were taken, and perhaps the reality of the United Church began to find a lodgment in the minds of those hitherto more or less opposed. As it has been said already, one of the surprises of the Smith Case was the revelation of a new and definite attitude towards the interpretation of Scripture among both clergy and laity. Erskine died in 1870, but it was not till some years after that event there was revealed to the world, forgetful of its saints, the character of one concerning whom those who knew/

knew the man most human, yet most divine, with least of the stains of earth, with most of the spirit of heaven.

To Erskine there were two books of profound importance, and these he studied with a zeal and originality in the possession of few. These books were the Scriptures and the human soul. Only a keen searcher of the Scriptures and one possessed of a genius for religious thought could have been able to give some of the renderings and explanations of Biblical truth which we find in Erskine's works. Even when the exposition is fanciful and far-fetched, the reader has the consciousness that he is in fellowship with one who meditated long and deeply on the things of the soul.

In the human heart Erskine found facts, conscience for one, and these facts found a counterpart in the revelation of the Divine Word. Erskine did not interpret the supernatural by the natural, but rather the natural by the supernatural. It is not surprising, therefore, that he had little interest in the historical criticism of Christianity. The test of the truth of Christianity was simply its adaptability or non-adaptability to the spiritual needs of the soul. Christianity to Erskine in its history is but an enlarged method of the Parables. The important elements in Christianity are its principles, which, if philosophy had chosen the right path, might have been discovered apart from the special revelation of Christianity. To Erskine the supernatural was the natural. The Christ of the Gospels was in the heart of humanity before He came as an infant of days. The Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Ascension are but the outward appearance of an inner and universal experience. The most vivid Incarnation takes place within ourselves. And when we add to all this Erskine's method of using the Scriptures as he brings reason, common-sense, judgment to bear on the facts of/

of Scriptures, we can see how in the region of Biblical criticism and examination, Erskine was also a pioneer. To him the Bible was not an infallible book; on the contrary, he seems to think sometimes the human mind in the future will be, and must be, independent of the historical heritage in the Bible.

These thoughts of Erskine in regard to the meaning of Scriptures and his methods of applying the truths of the Bible were altogether alien and different from the thoughts and methods in use by those who claimed to represent Christianity in their writings and popular presentations of the truth; but, gradually since Erskine's day, there have been writers and speakers who also have been drinking at Erskine's well. This partly accounts for the various eruptions and movements to which reference has been made in the historical part of this Thesis.

Erskine took very little interest in the criticism of German scholarship. He did not believe much in its fruitfulness, though in his attitude towards the surface, or superficial attempts of Colenso, Erskine realised such criticism was inevitable and must be met by a scholarship fearless in its efforts, but very tactful towards those who found in the Word no reasons for such inquiries, since the Word of God to them was the means of leading them to the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. At the same time, Erskine encourages the spirit of inquiry, which brought the minds of men from shibboleths and creeds to the Word itself, and by his pioneer work, he stands at the head of a goodly number of Scottish religious thinkers who, by their sanctified and restrained criticism, have not taken from the Word its majesty and greatness, or from the truth its grace and power, but have given to men a fuller knowledge of the Word and truth which can stand the stress and strain of /



of criticism. Erskine sowed the seed, which has come to life and which in a silent and unobtrusive way has broken up, or made fissures in the rocks by which the truth was imprisoned.

In his book on Election Erskine failed as an exegete, but, yet in his failure, there was gain on behalf of sane and progressive exegesis, for he puts at their true price the value of scholasticism and traditionalism. Perhaps from neither of these forms did Erskine shake himself entirely free for his reading of the New Testament was vitiated by two defective methods or historic facts :- (1) the assumption that the Greek of the New Testament was a specially coined form of words to express the facts and principles of the Kingdom of God, whereas the language of the New Testament was but the ordinary Greek of the common people, as Deissman has conclusively shown. And the other error was the assumption that the New Testament was in the nature of a text-book of truth from which there could be no deviation. The Epistles assumed a scientific form and were like the laws of the Medes and the Persians instead of being simply letters, often thrown off at white heat, and sometimes the expression of a love and sympathy, tenderness and hope, poles asunder from the idea of infallibility. To a certain extent, Erskine rises above these ancient forms in obedience to the dictates of his heart and conscience, for he refused to apply to the Divine Father that which would be accounted derogatory in man. He said, in effect, if our conscience and common-sense condemns God for pitilessness, and if the tenderness of the human heart is greater than the tenderness of God, then the conceptions which we have of God in Creeds and Confessions and even in the words of Paul are false; and therefore in his exuberance and enthusiasm the meaning in the mind of Paul/

Paul must be the interpretation of the heart of Erskine!

Erskine was not the first to bring to the interpretation of the Word of God the claims of commonsense of independent judgment, scholarship and reason, for in Erskine's day the rationalist and disciple of Tom Paine and Holyoake could always find an audience of weavers and artisans to listen with avidity as the Bible, on the very points touched by Erskine, was torn to tatters. Erskine helped to stay these iconoclastic efforts by removing the stock and trade of "natural" Biblical critics, since it was largely and often with Erskine's weapons that men, such as Norman MacLeod, Wardlaw, Fergus Ferguson Sen. made striking headway among the rationalistic weavers of the West and East of Scotland. That vogue almost ceased and to no one more than to Erskine is the change due. Erskine in all his interpretations of Scripture brought to his task a highly spiritual mind, marked by humility and reverence, guided by common-sense and practical judgment, for to him the value and measure of beliefs lay in the piety which these beliefs helped to create and keep in action. Miracles were attestations of truth, and therefore belief in miracles was not the important thing, or even necessary, though the Resurrection of our Lord stands for the completion of the full meaning of the Incarnation and its consummation in victory.

When we keep before our mind these values which Erskine placed on the Scriptures and follow in the history of all the churches in Scotland the development of Biblical criticism and the results of this criticism, it is an inevitable conclusion that Erskine was one of the pioneers who set out to seek the broad acres and lands of freedom and common-sense. The movement which he started increased the revolt against all that was implied in Election and Inerrancy of all Scripture; and if the successors of Erskine gladly followed their leader, so also those who claimed/

claimed to hold by the inerrancy of Scripture found in Erskine's attitude something that was helpful to their cause. Erskine, in his wider views of Scripture, was tolerant and careful not to hurt the susceptibilities of those who did not agree with him. In the Robertson Smith case a very curious letter <sup>(1)</sup> was written by Principal Rainy such a letter as one would suppose Professor Robertson Smith would, or should, have written, were he as anxious not to offend as was Erskine's aim in his attitude towards the Word of God. The terms of the letter relating specially to this are in the following words - "A member of the Church of Christ, and much more a professor, is bound to have regard to the connections and feelings of the brethren, not indeed as ruling his faith, but as conveying a weighty admonition."

This is an echo of Erskine's words to Bishop Colenso.

We have seen Erskine had little knowledge of German Biblical scholarship; he saw such a study of the word to be inevitable, for, indeed he himself let loose forces which in Scotland, apart from German scholarship, had carried religious thought to such a position that when Robertson Smith put the results of that scholarly criticism into form for readers and thinkers in Scotland, there were many who were not overwhelmed with these results, but gave earnest heed to them and realised that the Bible was not being filched from them but given to them with a new meaning and power. And in the creation of that hospitality, towards facts and new ideas somewhat startling and revolutionary, Erskine had a share.

At the time of the Robertson Smith case another leader of thought in the Free Church, Dr. Marcus Dods, was accused of denying the inerrancy of Scriptures, and at a later period he raised a storm of protest because of another statement/

(1). Life of Rainy, 324.

statement that a man could be a Christian and yet not believe in the Resurrection and from this position we perceive that Dods was in sympathy with the contention of Erskine in regard to the miraculous element in the Scriptures. "These miracles were attestations of truth" - "the labels on bottles of medicine, but not the medicine itself."

Indeed, there is the suspicion that some held in regard to the Scriptures that in the Assembly these might be dealt with according to expediency, but in literature according to the spirit and knowledge of the scholar or expert. Principal Rainy in 1878 delivered a course of lectures in London to the College of the Presbyterian Church there, entitled *The Bible and Criticism*. In this volume (Hodder and Stoughton, 1878) the position taken up is practically that of Erskine in his letters to Bishop Colenso, Professor Lorimer, and Bishop Ewing, (*Letters*, Vol. 11, 209-217) at pp. 6 of *The Bible and Criticism* there are the words, "When I recognise an opinion as in general compatible with faith, and with useful service to the common cause, I do not thereby decide whether it is or should be free to men to teach it in my own church" .... We start, then, from common ground - the ground of faith; pp. 7. Then we come to all the various forms and branches of internal, and experimental evidence, on which I do not dwell. But the conclusive proof, to which all these minister in their place (which is also the most wide available) arises by our discernment of a Divine witness in the truths which the Scriptures set forth; Christ is His own witness"; its (Bible) character and place in history; pp. 33 - "that the highest and most conclusive evidence is that which the Divine message truly affords, when, in connection with the word/

word of the Spirit of God with the heart it makes us conscious of its peculiarity and power." "God in his revelations has commonly been pleased to draw near to men in connection with the practical experience of life"; pp.36; suppose you recognise in this the work of a parent, who combined in a remarkable degree the needful knowledge and desirable care and accuracy, and who had equal claims on your love and your confidence"; pp.38."Certainly the Bible does not profess to guarantee to the believer a theory of the history of all its parts. It does not profess to certify us how each came into being and was preserved"; pp. 52. "We usually conceive the truths to be most adequately expressed when they are summed up in clear intellectual forms, and the duties when they are condensed into comprehensive moral principles; in short idealised"; pp.53. "But yet God, in revealing, is seen approaching men, not on the plane of ideas, but as one has said, on the plane of fact."

When we turn to the Bible and its Origin and Nature, (Dods: T.and T.Clark, Edinburgh, 1905). We find words to this effect....."we find then (in the Bible) the proclamation of God's Fatherhood and the restoration of right relations at once with Him and with our fellow-men." pp.10. "That religion which makes no provision for transforming ourselves and imparting to us a spirit which will express itself in righteousness is not the ultimate religion." pp.13..."If he (Luther) cannot make good this position that the truth of the Word of God has power to verify itself as such to the conscience it awakens, he has no standing at all," i.e. in regard to the difference between himself and Rome." pp.40. "He does not need to go to the Church to ask if this be God's Word; his conscience tells him it is. Deeper than this for a foundation of faith/

faith you cannot get, and any faith that is not so deeply founded is insecure - it may last, and it may bring a man to all needed benefit, but it is not reasonably defensible, and therefore it is liable to be upset." pp. 41 .....

"The harmony of all nature and the tendency of its most various constituents toward one end are becoming daily more obvious, and theists maintain this consistency of nature can be accounted for only on the supposition that it is governed by purpose. The instinctive persistency with which through all interruptions man cleaves to a moral idea, never ceasing to have it in view and to work toward it, implies an existence superior to his own in which that ideal is actualized and which is the guarantee of his attainment." pp.68 .... "When Plotinus said, "He must become god-like who desires to see God", he uttered the principle which lies at the root of the matter." "Moral affinity is an essential of personal intimacy. A man cannot understand a character with which his own has no accord." "We cannot make ourselves understand by those who are utterly unlike ourselves neither can God." .... pp. 85, "It will be gathered that God has revealed Himself especially in His redemptive energy, that we see most of God and all that is essential to this "character and purposes in His approaches to man and education of man in order to restore him to Himself and to free him from all evil." pp.96.

Now, if we compare the stand-point of Luther, which was also largely that of Dods, with what Erskine has written on the same topic, we at once see the dynamic effect in his writings on Religious Thought in Scotland. It is no part of this thesis to affirm that the thoughts of these writers in 1878 and 1905 are not their own findings, but to show that long before these learned men wrote Erskine was casting his seed upon the irrigating waters and that seed, directly/

directly, and indirectly, has borne fruit in response to the faith and labours of Erskine. Conscience is the test of every doctrine to him, and it is in the realm of conscience that the Divine finds fit soil for these seeds which have made men great. The psychology of Erskine laid emphasis on the fact that he considered the only argument in religion worth anything is that which speaks to the heart. The conscience, which God has given to every man, is a much higher gift than either an outward, or inward oracle. That which does not enter by conscience, but is merely put upon us or conferred on us can never really affect our nature - it may elevate us as instruments in the hands of God, but it cannot elevate us into fellowship with God. And therefore the smallest conscious and sympathetic conformity to the love of God is a much higher thing than being made the instruments to raise the dead or to declare things to come. In the case of the first, the nature is elevated, in the case of the other, it is only used for an elevated purpose. "I believe," says Erskine, "that all fundamental spiritual truths are out of the sphere of Conscience, and that we do not apprehend them at all unless we apprehend them in our Conscience." "The origin of Popery and all similar religious forms spring from this desire of men to escape the responsibility in making a choice. The Papist substitutes implicit obedience throughout to the authority of another and the Protestant the same in obedience to conscience." "Persons professing Christianity often speak of the natural conscience, as they call it, disrespectfully, and yet all the true Christianity that ever found a place in man's heart must enter through that door." "If we are made to receive out of God we ought to expect that we should be furnished with something in the spiritual taste fitted to judge of the matter received."

Erskine, /

Erskine, in a letter of 13th August, 1838, to Madame de Broglie (pp.323, Vol.1., Letters) wrote, "I see that I have given you an impression perfectly foreign to my meaning. My object is not in the smallest degree to say what Conscience might do for man without the Bible, but to say that all that a man learns from the Bible, without its awakening within him a living consciousness of its truth, might as well not be learned - that is, I believe that there is a real correspondence between the truths of the Bible and the spiritual part of man's nature, in the same way as there is a correspondence between the outward relations of life (as parent and child, husband and wife, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbours etc.) and the feelings of man's heart." Dr. Rainy, from whose book on the Bible and Criticism certain quotations have been given, writes in another of his works (Sojourning with God, and other Sermons, pp. 162) - "It would be good for some of you to be more in the way of coming to sit down at the feet of God in Christ, and to think a child is glad to have a Father; also, that the Father is glad to have a child."

In another part of the same letter of Erskine to which reference has been made, we find the words, "I wish to guard people against supposing that they believe a doctrine of the Bible, or have faith, merely because they believe that the Bible is true. I believe also that there are different depths of meaning in the same truth, and that according to the degree of spiritual discernment of the deeper meaning so is the profit from the doctrine. I do not oppose the conscience to the Bible, but I say the Bible is meant and fitted for the conscience as a telescope is meant for the eye. The conscience is the eye, the Bible is the telescope, and as the telescope does not change the faculty of sight, but brings more objects within its range, so does the Bible to the conscience. I believe that God/



God has left no man without the means of salvation, and that a man without a Bible has still a God and a God whom he can get acquainted with through his conscience, and I believe that salvation means growing in acquaintanceship with God and in conformity to His will....." To Principal Shairp Erskine said "Till the Bible and conscience meet and illuminate each the other, there is no true light, no true conviction. (356; Vol.2., Letter). In 1865 Erskine as stated in Miss Wedgwood's Journal, (pp. 161, Vol 2, Letters) said, "I think we shall learn to value the Bible more as we grow independent of it. I do value the Bible exceedingly, but I do not feel that I depend upon it. When I find a small despised people from the first asserting a righteousness in the Divine Being which I do not find in the gods of more enlightened nations I cannot feel this is merely accident. This was the teaching of God. But, then, when I come upon discrepancies in the narrative which are very definite and striking, neither can I ignore them and I feel this is not inspiration." In regard to the criticism of the Bible Erskine affirmed, according to the same authority, "yes, we cannot crush it, we must accept it." But the object of criticism is that which is variable. The object of faith is that which is unchanging, which is true being. Now, I have no difficulty in receiving the fact of miracle. But if any one has, I do not conceive that he is thereby debarred from entering into the spirit of Christianity. The one is a fact, the other is a principle. The two things can never come into collision with each other." Writing to Professor Lorimer in 1858, Erskine says, "I cannot draw a distinct line between inspiration in the Bible and inspiration out of the Bible. At the same time, I ought to say that I find thoughts and words both in the Old Testament and in the New which reach my inmost soul with a conviction and a power that I find in

no other thoughts and words ..... and the outward Christ could not have been our Saviour unless He had been also within ..... of one revelation I am perfectly sure, and that is the revelation of God's light in my conscience..... I have found a medicine which heals me; I have found an omnipotent Friend, whom I may, by following selfish desires shut out from my spiritual light and from whom I can never separate myself..... if any textual emendations or any improved translation could bring this truth into clearer light, I should welcome them with my whole heart. Even without this unspeakable advantage I welcome them; but I have often been disappointed by finding that men who were zealous for the critical processes were comparatively cold to this, without which these processes are mere matters of philology." (pp. 212-217, Letters, Vol.2.)

The inference from all these quotations is surely that Erskine was a pioneer to a better understanding of the Bible, Revelation and Inspiration. What he says in his Letters is to be found by the reader of his other writings, for there is not one of these positions to which reference therein direct or indirect, is not made. There was a long period during which Erskine's pen was idle, so far as any work appealing to the public was concerned, though he was ever writing, but it must never be forgotten that in his Letters and in his fellowship with others, he was always seeking to inform others and inculcate the truths he had reached, He was a choice soul and those who enjoyed his freindship and hospitality were also those who were moulded for finer issues, and through the writings, and public utterances of such, Scottish thought was gradually moulded and prepared to take up, not an advanced position - not so far as Erskine was concerned - for apart from textual results the position, even to-day, is not an objective much beyond that/

that of Erskine, but rather is marked by the consolidation of the position of Erskine, for notwithstanding Declaratory Acts there has been a recrudescence of the antiquated forms of Bible study. Fundamentalism is not a Scottish product. It is largely American, but it has influenced some forms of religious thought in Scotland, more especially in the smaller bodies of the Christian church. That the Presbyterian Church in Scotland has been kept from this attitude is because so many of the leaders of that church have accepted the positions of Erskine, though it must be acknowledged there is still in pulpit work a timidity to express boldly the substance of the faith in regard to many of the points which criticism and common-sense have been made good. There is also the desire to consider the weak and simple, but with a fuller understanding of the Bible in the teaching and text-book of the schools, the hand of the Church will be forced and her position will require to be made plain. The case will not be what do you run into, or keep out in the interpretation of Scripture, but what are the facts and beliefs which are so interpreted and read.

Pulsford, in his Book "Quiet hours" has put the position of Erskine thus - "The writings of the New Testament are a Divine testimony concerning Christ, but the testimony is not Christ. We owe our knowledge of Christ to our holy books of testimony, but we must not confound Christ with our knowledge of Christ. Gravitation, as a law of the universe, operates where no knowledge of gravitation exists. Not that there is a strict analogy between the universal presences of Christ and the law of gravitation; for Christ is a spiritual power; therefore to know Him and to love Him are most important, as conditions of his operation. And for this reason He has commended the word/

word of His Gospel to be carried into all the world and preached to every creature. But Christ as a presence, as a motion in the soul, as a spirit of grace, is already present with every creature.....Let the missionary everywhere tell the heathen this, that there is one among them whom they know not, and that he is come to make Him known to them."  
 (1)p.220. V.2..

Since Erskine's day the Bible is a different book; it has lost nothing of value, but many things have been gained. The Bible may be used in two ways:- (1) Kept well bound in a beautiful casket, like a nugget of gold, or (2) like nuggets broken up, smelted and used for coins of the realm to do business in the market-place. Erskine's treatment of the Word was of the second description; he used it with reverence and humility, but he also brought to bear on its contents the ordinary tools of life - also the gifts of God - commonsense, reason, conscience, a sanctified ingenuity and sense of the fitness of things. In this way Erskine set on foot a movement, which has made the Bible not less, but more precious. Erskine, therefore, in Scottish Religious Thought, by his writings is one of the pioneers; he was also an anticipator, who through his assertion of the Christian consciousness has given to Religious Thought in Scotland an apologetic weapon with which to meet a too zealous, and over-reaching dogmatism.

(1) App.31.

C H A P T E R      V I I I .

Erskine's adoption of the idea of belief in Final Restoration was not a step taken rashly, for he had a very tender heart towards those of a different opinion. The reason for his doubts lies in the fact of God's infinite tenderness and love; but this was not the sole reason for his faith in Final Restoration.<sup>(1)</sup>

Erskine says if there was to be no restoration, then the Sovereignty of God was defeated, and the eternal purpose of love, which never faileth, thwarted and God is Love. The will of man, even although Erskine at first did not make allowance for its resistive power, could not ultimately withstand the warmth of Divine Love, for, surely, "He who took such patience with the fossil of the red sandstone would not cease warring against evil in the citadel of man's soul till victory was complete and evil finally overthrown." At first Erskine had to bear the criticisms of his dearest friends, yet he had a hope, "which I would not willingly think contrary to the revelation of mercy." Writing from Geneva in 1839 to his sister, one of the most lovable of souls, yet dubious in regard to the belief just manifesting itself more certainly in her brother's mind and letters, Erskine says he met a lady who asked him concerning the love of God to man after death... "I then told her frankly what I hoped for all men." She told me that she herself sometimes entertained that hope, but that she could not find it in the Bible, yet she thought there could be no real gospel without it. I think so too - the unending love of God. (pp.346. Vol.1. Letters, Etc.) Again on pp.353 of the same Vol.1. Erskine in a letter to Captain Paterson writes, "My belief in the continuation of the process of spiritual education beyond this life relieves me at all events from the agonising/

(1). App. 29.

agonising thought that twenty-six years of negligence are to fix the eternal condition of the soul for good or evil." Hence to the other reasons, which Erskine states, he brings to bear on the record of The Word, not only conscience, but also common-sense, and judgment for the right interpretation of the reality. To his sister, Mrs. Stirling, he writes from Geneva, 1839, "Life is the education time, the seed-time for eternity; there lies the whole importance. The purpose of God towards men is not probation as he once held, but an educative process, "which manifests the unchangeable character of God, rather than a particular act." Some of Erskine's continental friends were very opposed to this idea of Final Restoration, but Erskine was as uncompromising, though ever keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace....."The hope of the final restoration, even of those, he writes to Madame Forêt, who are now wandering farthest from God, is to me a most precious hope. It is a hope also in perfect harmony with the great principles that we must eat of the fruit of our own doings, for I believe that no mortal being can ever rise out of misery except by rising out of sin, and that none can rise out of sin except by rising in Christ's death; that is, by accepting the due punishment, and by ceasing from their own will, and living in the divine will." V. 2,59. It is apparent therefore that Erskine's mind on Final Restoration did not depend on sentiment, or on an imperfect understanding of the problem of evil, indeed, as a matter of fact, the nobler and purer in character Erskine became, the profounder was his abhorrence of evil, whilst at the same time growing in certainty in regard to Final Restoration. Erskine, in a letter to his friend the Rev. Thomas Matthews, 1853, (Letters, Vol.11. pp.79), makes reference to the "Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament," and calls special attention to chapters 15, 16,

23, and adds, "This last is a wonderful opening up of a very simple but glorious truth." "I think," he says, "it is the true way of preaching the final restoration of all." When we turn to the first of these three chapters, along with the second we find the sin of the world is the preference men give to the material over the spiritual, a mistake, or sin committed by Israel, when in the fulness of the time the people of God said, "We have no king but Caesar." thus referring the Man-god to the God-man, but, yet, in the midst of modern forms of the same mistaken choice, the mountains of the Lord's house shall be established above the hills, and that all nations shall flow into it. "And since the glory of the universe implies the blessedness of the individuals who compose it, since our belief in the immortality of God's Kingdom does not interfere with the belief in a personal immortality, but sustains and ratifies it, we are sure that the vision in the potter's house will be fulfilled in another very literal and blessed manner. He who has given each of us a tenement of clay, may subject it to much hard discipline; may suffer it at last to be quite marred, and to return to its kindred earth again. Only that which hinders the shining forth of the spiritual body in the human form will perish." (1) Again Erskine in a letter to a friend, Mrs. Schwabe, a unitarian, says, "I believe thus, that the recorded history of our Lord in the Gospels is the outward and objective manifestation of a great subjective truth, which is going on, and which will go on until every soul of man is brought back to God." (Vol.2:85.) Perhaps the clearest exposition of Erskine's views on Final Restoration is to be found in the letter to Mr. Craig, author of Final Salvation. In this letter (V.2,237), Erskine/

(1). The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament.  
pp.424.



Erskine says, "Chastisement is that we may be partakers of his holiness; punishment (is) a purpose agreeing with the character of God who willeth not the death of a sinner; it is surely most unreasonable to suppose that God should change His manner of dealing with us, as soon as we quit the world, and that, if we have resisted, up to that moment, His gracious endeavour to teach us righteousness, He should at once abandon the purpose for which He created us and redeemed us, and gives us up to the everlasting bond of sin;" and, returning to the 5th chapter to the Romans, Erskine asserts, "Only Final Restoration through the redemption in Christ is the ultimate goal to correspond with universal sin in Adam." How does Erskine meet the declaration of our Lord on this topic? He fixes on the term, "aionios" and asserts that the word rendered eternal, and everlasting by our translator, and says, he does not believe it has that meaning since "it refers to man's essential or spiritual state, and not to time, either finite or infinite." This translation of "aionios" is the one now generally adopted by all those who are in sympathy with Erskine's position on the question of endless punishment. Thus the writer of *Eternity, is it a Biblical Idea?* (Brown, James Clarke and Co.Ltd., London) writes, in regard to the very idea expressed by Erskine....."In the first place, the reader of the English Bible, assuming it so revised, will find that the idea of eternity, of a beginningless past or an endless future is no longer given expression there. And this possibly to his surprise; for it may be that he had always thought of that idea as having originated in the Bible." (pp.209).

It is, however, doubtful whether the intricacies of exegesis carry us very far, but Erskine is on firmer ground, when, in a letter to Bishop Ewing he writes, pp. 223, Vol.II, *Letters*, "If it were believed that God had created us for education/

education, and that not one in a thousand had really received any education, it would generally be accepted without hesitation that the education must necessarily proceed in the next world."

The Calvinistic belief in eternal punishment attacked by Erskine is one that is losing power over the minds of men. And it can be said, with all confidence, that the language of orthodox theology on the matter, even in Erskine's day, was not the expression of popular opinion. Within the theological circle, minds, however, were at work. Morison, deposed from the Secession Church, had his doubts on the subject. Gilfillan in the U.P. Church had his reservations. George Macrae, another deposed minister, declared his antagonism to the belief. Fergus Ferguson took the "via media" and substituted conditional immortality, and one of the recent writers, Leckie of the same theological lineage, as those already mentioned, casts in his lot with Erskine.

Every student, therefore, engaged in the elucidation of this topic must inevitably turn for guidance to Erskine.

What was the nature of Erskine's influence on the religious thought in Scotland concerning this subject which interested our Scottish poet, who, even more than Erskine established in the popular mind ideas, which were far in advance of the schools of theology? One has only to hear the "obiter dicta" of some devoted, plain, pious man or woman in regard to their doubts of the relations of a Heavenly Father, and the thought of endless punishment. What was the nature of Erskine's influence? It has been already noted that Erskine ceased to speak in public and even ceased to write after a certain period in his life, but, by individual effort, through letters and talks, he reached a large circle of friends, and the most of these were centres of influence. He held the torch and consciously or unconsciously, other torches were lit, and silently

the light was helped to dispel the darkness. Indeed, it is only in this way that we can account for the fact that so many of the tentative statements of Erskine have entered into the common stock of Christian beliefs.

When Erskine stated the fact of the Unconditional Freeness the logical consequence thereof was Universal Restoration, which became for Erskine a fixed belief. Dr. Chalmers, as we have seen, recognised this inference and thereafter became rather lukewarm in his attitude to the position of Erskine in Religious Thought. To Erskine in his closing years Universal Restoration became his great theme. Erskine stands in regard to this hope of Universal Restoration at the head of a stream of thought, which since his day has gathered in momentum. Mcleod Campbell refused to go as far as Erskine and Principal Shairp thought Erskine did not allow enough for the resistive power of the human will, even to the infinite love of God. Erskine may not have given this truth or conception a firm basis - but who is able to do this? Yet he, in 1838, was thinking out the question when as yet so far as the Church in Scotland was concerned the idea had not come openly to the surface of thought. The change which has come over the mind of clergy and laity in regard to this topic is a great and momentous one. It is a question which comes up for solution; it cannot be stilled. Professor McIntosh, in his book "Immortality and the Future", writes, "If, at this moment a frank and confidential plebiscite of the English-speaking ministry were taken, the likelihood is that a considerable majority would adhere to Universalism." To-day it is impossible - unthinkable - that a modern preacher would ever dare to use the words of Professor Halyburton or the saintly McChayne/

McCheyne on Eternal Punishment. The pulpit is silent but then silence is an opinion. The modern mind has turned away from the idea that man is here on probation or is watched by a judge who demands stripe for stripe. Erskine's idea that we are passing through a process, and time of education, holds the field. It may be said he minimises the facts as set forth in the New Testament and when it is asked, what facts - the answer is the direction in which the current works or the general trend of the narrative in regard to Universal Restoration. Again it is said his exegesis is wrong but all this does not touch the central position of Erskine.

Erskine does not minimise evil, indeed, as he advanced in years he felt more keenly what the heart of God must feel because of a world lying in wickedness, yet this did not turn Erskine from his conception.

Like some thinkers Erskine veils his thoughts for a time lest he might be the means of hurting the feelings of others, but the time came when the trumpet gave no uncertain sound. If it is granted that life is an educative process, that, may be a direct reason why life should be continued hereafter.

The clear declaration of Erskine is to be preferred to the esoteric form, which neither exalts nor advances truth.

There are three forms in which this question of the future life may be considered. First of all to accept the plain words or trend of Scripture, that for all who reject righteousness here there will be eternal punishment; secondly, that another chance will be given, and if not taken, the future life will be determined, i.e. Conditional Immortality, which means the extinction of human souls and therefore the failure in the divine masterpiece/

masterpiece; then thirdly, there is Erskine's position that all shall be saved. How did he come to take up this position. He read Scripture not as if it were an inerrant message, but as truth which had come to men through the minds of frail men, who even though taught of the Spirit viewed the facts in the light of their age. Further, to Erskine the heart of God was eternally kind; and in that kindness God would not be defeated. Does this, some ask not make the Divine Being the slave of His Love even as Sovereignty made the Eternal One the servant of His justice? Love never faileth and God is Love, for in love there is the full revelation of the contents of the Father's heart. Erskine called men to face the question; perhaps he did not fully answer all the objections, but, like John Foster, he had the intuitive insight to recognise the call of love in his own heart for all men, and, if the heart of man demands this because of a moral principle, shall we say less than that of the heart of the Eternal? We know Erskine studied the writings of John Foster and was greatly stirred by them. Foster was Calvinistic in his doctrines but on the question of eternal punishment he was adamant for rejection of the idea. This position was adopted not because Foster had an inadequate conception of sin since his conception of evil was intense. The source of his belief was two-fold, for first his imaginative insight enabled him to realise the horrors of eternal destruction; and secondly his sensibility with which he looked upon any fellow-creature in pain. This much we can gather from such a sentence as the following - "It often surprises me that the fearful doctrine sits, if I may so express it, so easy on the minds of the religious and benevolent believers of it." To Foster belief in Eternal Punishment could not consort/

consort with a belief in the Divine goodness - "The belief that God is love, that His tender mercies are over all his works."

In *The Christian Life*, (Bayne; Edinburgh; 1855, Hogg), the author, whilst disagreeing with Foster's position, writes, "Let it not, however, be thought that we therefore deem the position of those who adduce it weak. We consider it not only strong, but in one point of view, absolutely unassailable. pp.333 Jonathon Edwards could embrace in one view the terrors of the lost and the felicity of those in heaven. Not so Erskine, since the love of God had visited him in some overwhelming manner and in line with Foster, Erskine could not conceive how it was possible to translate that love into its opposite in the eternal punishment of the lost." Bayne, from whom we have quoted, was a representative of the orthodoxy of his day (1855) and his attitude towards those Denying Eternal Punishment is a proof that Erskine had not written in vain. Heaven, to Erskine, would be a barren inheritance without the Divine victory of love. Light has still to break on this theme; and it must come in two forms so far as present knowledge can cast a light - first, by a re-interpretation of the words of Jesus. Have we the real words? Is the Christ of love and mercy not unequally yoked when these are ascribed to Him, even by Foster, in this description of Eternal Punishment, "On no allowable interpretation do they (the words of Scripture on the subject) signify less than a very protracted duration, and a formidable severity." Is there not an answer to this in the efforts of all prison reformers to lessen the power of force and to bring in the spirit of sweet reasonableness; to draw out of the worst the best and not to endeavour by force to create new creatures?

Erskine/

Erskine reached his vision of Universal Restoration along the line of his personality and who among teachers has a better right, though he himself was unconscious of the privilege, than the man of whom one of his dearest friends, Principal Scott, said when he thought of God, Thomas Erskine came into his mind.

Perhaps it will be found that Erskine's greatest legacy to Religious Thought in Scotland is the contribution which he made to the doctrine of Universal Restoration. It is still a greatly canvassed problem and its solution will be associated with Erskine, ever conscious of the all-embracing love of God.

The influence of the writings of Erskine on the Religious Thought of Scotland may be regarded in the light of a contrast. If we think of these works which, by the law of the survival of the fittest, remain and claim the attention of those interested in the development of Religious Thought in Scotland this fact cannot escape the attention of the student and historian, viz., that the writings of Erskine, which deal with *The Eternal Evidence*, *Faith*, *The Unconditional Freeness*, *The Brazen Serpent*, *The Doctrine of Election*, and *The Spiritual Order* - all amplified and corrected in Erskine's Letters, are now part of the common stock of religious belief and thought, though at the time when the books were published their contents were violently attacked and the writer branded as a heretic. Erskine felt he had a call to write, for among religious writers and thinkers there seemed not only to be stagnation of thought, but also indifference in regard to the need of clear exposition and definite knowledge in the interests of the Gospel. Erskine's choice of topics and his courage appear to have been justified in results. No doubt many minds /

minds since Erskine's day have been engaged in the study of those same subjects, and, perhaps, Erskine did not work out everything that is believed now in regard to the topics mentioned, but can we not assuredly say that Erskine did blaze the trail for all who have followed and that those who have helped in this development acknowledge Erskine's leadership or pioneer work?

The Internal Evidence lead the way to the fruitful field of Christian Consciousness and in the application of the spiritual to the interpretation of the natural world there was certainly the anticipation of a method of settling the internecine dispute between religion and science. These are not enemies. Plato interpreted the natural by the spiritual and Erskine, with a fuller knowledge of the Spiritual in the terms of Christian Faith, has done the same to the great gain of Religious Thought in Scotland. Professor Bowman of Glasgow University, in a course of lectures to the Workers' Educational Association (Scotsman Report, 25th Feby. 1929) shows how valuable this relationship of the Spiritual and Natural is; "Behind the sensuous world of Nature according to Plato" - and even more so to Erskine - "was a supersensuous world of abiding truths. Nature therefore rested upon a supernatural basis. This conclusion furnished the principle required for the reconciliation of science and religion. In the language of modern thought the whole question had to do, with the interpretation of experience in its two aspects - the objective and subjective. The natural world with which the sciences dealt was the system of all objects. In this world object stood related to object.....in ways characteristic of an objective system of subjective processes which had no place in the objective way of nature. These processes must/



must, therefore, be recognised as an intimation of a supernatural order. The supernatural was not something remote and exceptional, but something close to every one of us. It was the very substance of that which made us what we were - conscious subjects. To recognise this fact was to recognise the existence of universal order of subject - selves and the logic of the position led to the conception of one universal subject which men called God. Between this conception and the conception of a natural order there was and could be no conflict. Each was due to the recognition of something fundamental in all experience, an inner and an outer aspect of what remained indissolubly one science implied and extraverted religion and introverted view of experience, and the reality of which experience was the guarantee. But while the two attitudes were thus complementary, religion implied at once the profounder and more comprehensive reading of reality."

When we compare these words with the thoughts and reflections of Erskine we are at once reminded of the fact that long before any other writer and teacher had perceived the reality implied in the terms,,the natural law in the spiritual world, Erskine was moving in that realm of ideas and in his Internal Evidence was asserting the fact of Conscience - as real as any fact of science - and finding in Conscious correspondences, intimations hints of the Supreme Will in the government of the world of matter and in the Divine dealings with the souls of men. And it was with weapons thus provided by Erskine that Religious Thought is able to meet the enemy in the gate.

Erskine found seven forms of faith used in religious thought. That discovery to him was the reason/

reason of the uncertainty and fruitlessness of preaching in his day. Erskine simplified Faith. There were two worlds, the natural and the spiritual - knowledge of the first was by sight - and knowledge of the second by faith. Sight is one of the five senses but faith is the religious sense or faculty as real as any of the five senses. Watson calls it the sixth sense. pp 152.

(The Mind of the Master: Watson: 1896: London: Hodder and Stoughton.) Faith and religion Erskine has shown are often regarded as one. This is an error, since faith is apt to be exercised on doctrines instead of seeing God and abiding in Him! This defines also Erskine's attitude to miracles. If we believe in miracles - i.e. The Resurrection - then it is on the evidence produced, but, if in Christ we rise into newness of life that is different.

Such discussions in regard to Faith and The Unconditional Freeness seem out of place now because the positions, which cost Erskine so much, are axioms with us. Yet, it must be kept in mind these terms were hotly canvassed and disputed before they entered into the common stock of belief and religious thought. It is difficult to visualise all the happenings behind the Unconditional Freeness but such events were real since the result of Erskine's book divided men into parties and severed friendships, for how true it is that men will do anything save live The Word though in the life of faith there is the greatest testimony to truth.

Erskine discerned not only the one-sided nature of Calvinism but also understood the real and eternal value in Calvinism. The Sovereignty of God was a great conception, but the logician had made God the slave of His own Sovereignty. At first Erskine did not shake himself/

himself free from the blight of such a position.

Gradually, however, he perceived there was a wider horizon for the heart of God than the boundaries provided by logic, since, illumined by The Spirit, he perceived a revelation of boundless love streaming forth from the heart of God - the Eternal Father. It was the love of the Divine Father, through His righteousness, for all men that fixed the horizon of grace and therefore not logic. Calvin's logic lead him to isolate the Sovereignty of God; to place it in a lonely position and so dividing up therefore the unity of that spiritual experience in which Sovereignty played only a parallel and primary part and therefore the truth became the bare will of God. That fact did not escape the scrutiny of Erskine, since he found it contradicted in his heart,

The new apologetic which Erskine gave to Religious Thought was based on experimental religion, and, whilst he sought to bring the Divine Love to others, he felt the contradiction of his message in the fact of the Divine Sovereignty, and against this state of affairs his heart was uneasy, disturbed, and finally brought to a condition of revolt. Justification - "a juridical scheme, or forensic trial and sentence" is always behind all Christian experiences as these are described by Calvinism and so it comes to pass that Justification and Sanctification are separated - stand apart, and no attempt is made to show the natural order and developement in which Justification and Sanctification are related to one another. Erskine perceived the glory of the Calvinistic conception of the Sovereignty of God but to this conception he has added that which has enriched and clarified human knowledge of God, viz., the love through/

through which the Eternal Father seeks to achieve his purpose in the heart of man and in the history of humanity. The Divine Father, therefore, is not just bare will but a Father who unveils, and reveals his Fatherly heart to all His children. "Mere good pleasure" gives place to love that streams forth from the heart of the Father who longs for man's sympathy and for human willingness to make the righteous mind and righteous will of God its own. It was to make this not only evident but effective in the experience of men that Christ made atonement.<sup>(1)</sup> In other words, as Christ was one in righteousness with God, so man accepting this truth, or recognising this light from above, just as he takes the reality of the sunlight, has forgiveness and the boundless love of God in his heart.

Manifestly, therefore, Erskine brought to the interpretation of the Word a different spirit and another light than that of Calvinism. The Fatherhood of God now took the place of the Sovereignty of God - not the isolated position of the Sovereignty of Calvinism - but rather, that Sovereignty was reinterpreted in the light and glory of Fatherhood. This shifting of position in Scottish religious thought did not bring about anything revolutionary but the new method has lead to an enlargement of the conception of God and has been a source of great fruitfulness not only in the development of thought, but also in the dispersion of the nebulous mists surrounding the character of the Divine Being. It was indeed, to change the metaphor, like the leaven put into the meal.<sup>(2)</sup> The leavening process has gone on. An orderly development has given to our Scottish religious thought through this new vision of God, a significant greatness and worthiness. Love is boundless. It seeks fellowship and the first expression of the Divine fellowship is, as we have seen, in the welling up of Divine love and the out-flowing of that love to the heart of the Eternal Son, who took upon Himself/

(1) App.25. (2) App. 20-24.

Himself, in response to the Divine Love, His atoning work for humanity. The relation between the Eternal Father and Son is now, according to Erskine, a federal reality or relationship, instead of a covenant relationship - in the sense of a bargain - and it is in and through this same relationship we interpret the reality of the Holy Spirit. Principal Fairbairn, in his book, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, pp.349, emphasises the effect of this pioneer work of Erskine.... "What is still more extraordinary is the way in which the Sonship of Jesus affects the conception of God, how it touches its majesty with grace, softens its rigour, turns its solitude into society, and changes it from a dead abstract into a living concrete. The Fatherhood, which is its correlate, made the God of the Jews into the God of the whole earth." Dorner, in his system of *Christian Doctrine*, has also words which establish the far-seeing power of Erskine as a pioneer in religious thought pp.415, Vol. 1.... "The anti-trinitarian movements of recent years have made it perfectly clear that there consequently only remains the choice either to think of God in a Unitarian manner, and in that case to see, even in Jesus a mere man, or, if He is supposed to be the God-man, to hold to the eternal distinctions in God, and therefore to undertake to prove that the unity of God is quite consistent with such distinctions. But faith, that Divine work, equally bears upon it the signature of the Holy Spirit, the consciousness of His Immanence in the heart, and in the Church, which, though it is not identical with the Being of God in Christ, makes Christ luminous within us, and leads us through Him to the Father".

The love of God the Father to all mankind is interpreted by Erskine to imply universal pardon whether men believe it or not; and this gift is vouchsafed in Christ whose/

whose atonement for men consisted in one-ness with the Father in regard to the hatefulness of sin, and love of righteousness. When man recognises these positions and therefore hates evil and loves righteousness unto obedience in action, faith has been at work since faith is an activity of the soul which perceives spiritual light, just as the eye beholds the light of the sun.

Sin to Erskine was self-will which man follows in preference to the will of God. Christ on the other hand identified His will with that of the Father. The atonement in its fruitfulness is man's blessing and free-gift, when man ceases to occupy a position of isolation and surrenders his will to the Will of God. Man cannot do this of himself. The Holy Spirit draws men and the work of the spirit is making luminous the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. Justification, therefore, is more than a mere forensic scheme.

Faith is beholding the light of grace as we look at the sunlight. Justification and sanctification are not isolated but united for the man, who finds a place in the Kingdom of God through union with Christ, has, because of that very fact, the energy of his sanctification. To Erskine all religious thought was meant to resolve itself into life and the fact that emphasis was laid on piety rather than on belief is no disparagement of thought, but, on the contrary, witnesses to the soundness both of the principle and thought.

Erskine may not have given a complete presentation of the Fatherhood of God or of the atonement, for some of the things he said in regard to faith may be of doubtful meaning, if not erroneous, but it is at the same time certain that his pioneer work set men to think out these problems, to develop his ideas, to work over the ground he had staked off, to follow the path to which he pointed and the result, as/

as we have seen from the history of religious thought in Scotland has been an influence, which has lead to a saner view of Christian thought, a fuller expression of the truths, a more winsome Evangel, and the liberation of thought, and inquiry which under the older system confined these operations of the mind within the bounds of Creeds, which, though the expression of human beliefs, were not the Scriptures to which Erskine, guided by the light of the Holy Spirit, appealed.

Erskine's discovery of the Fatherhood of God, his Internal Evidence, the Faith which he trusted, the Unconditioned Freeness of the Gospel, which he prized, were principles and truths of the Scriptures to which his heart assented and to which he was lead by a deep psychological understanding of his heart with its furniture and possessions. May it not be said, therefore, he also re-discovered man? Was there not, at least the suspicion in Calvinism that because God elected some, and rejected others there was a certain ignoring of human souls, who were on the earth not by their own choice? The phrase "out of his mere good pleasure" placed those not so happily situated in a most invidious position. Calvinism, it is said, puts iron into men - the elect - but what did it do for those outside the circle of the elect? Did it not engender fear and beget fatalism? Erskine, from a careful study of his moral and spiritual experiences, found the the contents of the soul were made up of conscience, intuitions, aspirations, desires, and faith in the reality of these things, distinct from the phenomena of outside realities, though the latter are supplementary to the first. Man, therefore, it would seem, from his creation and the fact of consciousness, had a definite place in the Divine scheme of things; for, as Erskine studied the story of man's travail and his own experience, he perceived and inferred an adaptation, not only to the thoughts revealed by Natural Religion, but also, to the message/

message of the Gospel which adaptations answered to the character of God in the written word, but above all in Jesus Christ. It may, however, be asked, did Erskine not admire Calvinistic doctrine and believe in it, when it made God and the thought of Him all and in all, whilst at the same time it made the creature almost less than nothing, and vanity thus creating in the mind "a deep reverence, a profound humility and self-abasement which are the true beginnings of all religion? Erskine did hold such beliefs but surely this does not imply on the part of Erskine that he lacked self-reverence, since, in his heart, there was the reality of conscience and conscience to him was the voice of God. That which hears the voice of God must be of inestimable value.

Benjamin Whichcote, the Cambridge Platonist, said, "If there were not other argument in the world to prove there is a God, a man is an argument sufficient in "himself". May we not add, if in man there are powers or qualities which enable him to criticise God's ways - i.e. in Calvinism - then there must be something wrong with the presentation of God by Calvinism? The saying of Whichcote has its counterpart in Erskine's value of man in the statement, "If there was only one man left in the world that man enjoying the benefits of grace would form the Church". It has been pointed out that though in the organic forms of matter there are conflicts these do not lead to strife. The animal feels no bond in the chain that binds it to the immediate present appetite and desire. It is otherwise with man. There is strife and the strife is a call to decide on which side he shall stand - i.e. for the ignoble, or for the nobility of one made in the image of God. Conscience points the way; and though two wills in man strive for the mastery/



mastery it is for man to decide on which side he will cast his lot. Man is responsible for the decision of his will. The entanglements of Calvinism can no longer hold him since he is a free man. Now, if Religious Thought in Scotland has been enriched through the doctrine of or belief in the Fatherhood of God, then from the implications of that belief or doctrine, (1) the value of a human soul, and of all souls alike, (2) the worth of Christian Consciousness there have come to Religious Thought in Scotland reinforcing tributaries of no mean order and power. Christian certitude has furnished facts, and principles in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Erskine rode the marches of Faith. In his discussion of Election he gives a detailed list of the many forms, which faith takes in the early 19th century writings and discussions of theological and Christian thought. All these he deletes and fixed on what he considers the main point, and in doing so, perhaps Erskine in his effort to simplify faith keeps the reader in a position of uncertainty and confusion but, notwithstanding this, the very essence of faith is described, not that forgiveness is ours because Christ has suffered, but rather that faith is a trustful apprehension of the character of God. Erskine claimed for Religious Thought the same position as that held by scientific workers in the apprehension of facts and truths from and through the facts. There are nerves in the body by which knowledge is transferred to the mind, so there are nerves of the soul. If touch convinces the mind, through material resistance that matter exists then conscience, the eye of the soul, brings conviction of the being of God. If the telescope informs the astronomer of worlds beyond worlds so in the same way faith re-inforced by the Word verifies the truth, "He hath set eternity in their hearts". That is why Erskine on one occasion affirmed he was as sure of God as of his own existence/

existence or the existence of anything he saw in nature. "I know in whom I have believed" was as real to Erskine as the assertion of the materialist who declares he sees the sunlight. Faith - the eye of the soul - perceives the love of God. The reciprocity of faith in spiritual things is as certain as the reciprocity of the senses in things material.

It must be noted the reciprocity of faith differs from fides charitata formula for as MacLeod Campbell pointed out this is a formula which "seals up the fountain before it is opened". Neither is faith good works. What is it then?

It is sympathy with the will of God. It is a spiritual tendency of heart and character towards God. Faith according to Scriptures, as interpreted by Erskine, is a certain form of soul or heart activity in moral and spiritual things and this activity is salvation in which faith apprehends a principle of immortal spiritual power. Faith is stirred by the love of Christ, the new law of life identical with righteousness - God's gift to all men. As we discern the beauty of the flower so we discern the love of God and the one form of discernment is as real and simple as the other. Erskine by these postulates cut through the tangle of definitions and descriptions of faith which obscured more than revealed the purpose of God in the Scriptures and in the living Christ. Erskine brought men back to the first principles of faith and its application not to creeds and confessions, but to the Scriptures illumined by the light of the Holy Spirit. The modern cry "back to Christ" has been heard. Erskine's book or Essay on Faith was but an ante-dated call implying the same belief that not in creeds but in Christ there is the truth which makes men free, for in Christ there is incarnated the Divine Sonship in God, the only sanction for the qualities which God demands of man.

There are two facts in Erskine's book. The Unconditional Freeness, which have meant much to Religious Thought in Scotland/

Scotland. The first is, there is forgiveness or pardon for all, whether men reject the blessing, or receive it; and if men are lost it is not because of Divine rejection, but the rejection by man of what is freely offered in Jesus Christ. This was Erskine's answer to the antinomies of the "Marrow man" - "a Gospel free, but a Gospel restricted"; and, it is along this line that Scottish Religious Thought lead by Erskine has travelled till to-day the declaration of Erskine is one of the common-places of teaching and preaching.

Erskine's various studies on The Atonement cannot be over-looked or neglected. Sometimes his mistakes even have cast a new light on the topics. He varies in this theory and from the Spiritual Order he appears to have finally accepted that of Maurice. The mysticism of the Atonement finds expression and attracts him. To Erskine the Atonement is a warning, because of its nature, against any cheapening of spiritual life .... "Christ has become the Head of new and uncondemned life in every man, in the light of which he may see God's love in law, and in punishment and may thus suffer to the glory of God and draw out from the sufferings that blessing which is contained in them".

The Atonement to Erskine is a sufficient and complete atonement, but the purifying of the nature which is produced by sorrow received in a godly sort follows since Christ suffered, and punishment lovingly received is the process by which we are sanctified. The value of the Resurrection in the doctrine of the atonement is emphasised for the second Adam in his rising brought a dispensation of forgiveness to all flesh. Up to the time when Erskine wrote his Essay on Faith he held the orthodox belief in penal suffering and he also failed somewhat to express the experimental contents/

contents of conviction of sin. There was something wanting in depth when Erskine affirmed happiness and self-preservation were the inducements men had to turn to God. Erskine, however, in the Brazen Serpent, struck a new note, that of sacrifice. Erskine had no stock definitions of The Atonement, but he gave hints and pointed out different aspects of the truth; he has warned as well as guided. What he has done for Religious Thought in Scotland along the line of his special approach is to show the Atonement is a doctrine with a variety of aspects and therefore, so far as a perfected theory is concerned, Erskine cannot be said to have left one, indeed the perfect theory is the theory to suspect, but, what he has done for Religious Thought has been to specify his tools, to show the result of his work in several unfinished attempts and to reveal a mind, though more intuitive than logical, yet, ready at all times to throw aside an imperfect synthesis for one wider and fuller. With Erskine it was truth at all costs, and no personal triumph disturbed his mind. In his efforts to reach the meaning of The Atonement he coined phrases, and sentences, which have entered into the common stock of writers who have sat at his feet. There is the term "spiritual renovation" and the highly pregnant statement "Life is an educative process not a period of probation". "Salutary" is one of his favourite words. He gave to all who advanced any statement, contrary to orthodox beliefs, a significant apologetic. In his Remarks Erskine writes, "There is nothing new in the cursory sketch of Christian doctrines, indeed, I should conceive a proof of novelty on such a subject as tantamount to a proof of error." Sieveright, in his book on Sanctification, says for himself of his contribution, "What is original is wrong". What does Erskine mean by his words? Is he pointing out that what he affirms, though it may seem "new", or "original" to the orthodox, whose religion rests on the confessions and creeds, it is not new/

new to those, who turn to the Word itself in order to find the ways of God?

What was the secret of Erskine's influence with, and power over those, who were within his circle of friends and sympathisers? Religion to him was a matter of experience, or the translation of the life of Christ into human life. Erskine said the truest Incarnation takes place within ourselves and it is on the soil of the human heart that Christ has been ever working, and all that Christ was, and did, is the outward evidence of a universal experience. And Erskine in a very marked way proved how these beliefs would produce a character that had more of heaven than of earth. It was the experience of the indwelling Christ that became to Erskine and was the strongest proof of the truth in the Scriptures. This explains why he speaks of growing away from the Bible, and why the critical examination and results of this criticism in regard to the Word of God were not so vital to him as to others. The important thing to him was the love of God in every heart, and the need to be ever proclaiming that evangelic message. In this Erskine seems to make a movement towards mysticism, but, though to him and the mystics, experience was the most significant in the spiritual life, yet Erskine never laid aside all his Calvinism nor what he had learned from Luther. Erskine was no mean thinker and whilst the mystics discounted the intellectual we see that in Erskine's final conception of the Atonement he falls back on a priori conception of the mystery and thereby seems to grant that even on the intellectual side of Christian principles, as revealed, there is a contribution added to the inner initial spiritual life in every heart. It is in this that we see Erskine striving to bring himself into line with every aspect of the human heart and mind. Perhaps in this struggle of Erskine to satisfy not only the heart but the intellect, he saved himself on the one hand from the crudities of the mystic, who/

despises the power or need of the mind to think, as Kepler said, the thoughts of God over again, and on the other from the insidiousness of Pantheism. "I am saved from pantheism," he writes to an unknown correspondent, "by the consciousness that I can and do resist God, and also that I can and do yield myself to Him." And the intellect can resist, and can also oppose God, but, in the resistance and opposition of thought there may be the very means by which moral and spiritual truth had been enlarged and quickened. It was in this way Erskine was saved from the temptation to identify the supernatural with the natural and yet, it cannot fail to strike the reader of Erskine that the Jesus of History does not occupy the same place in his writings as in the works of more recent authors. That does not mean Erskine denied the historic Christ, but it does imply that the historic Christ in His work had laid the foundations of His Kingdom in the human heart even before the human heart had reached the stage of putting in to documentary forms the deep things of the soul, which was indwelt by the Incarnate Word long before He was incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth.

To those, therefore, who knew Erskine in the flesh, and to those who read his efforts to reach the truth, there was and is the example of one, who is ready always to sell all in order to buy the field possessed of the hid treasure of truth; and to Erskine the science of theology is not an insignificant study but is one which calls forth all that is best of mind and will in men; to this man there was one desire, the dispersion of the mists enveloping the conception of God; and from all the travail of such a heart, his friends and followers saw a glorious issue. If in all the Churches of Scotland there were choice souls - a Caird and a Morison, a Hanna and a Pulsford, behind each of these there is Erskine, the pioneer, not afraid of his own inability to steer perfectly the course of truth.

C O N C L U S I O N S .

CONCLUSIONS.

Erskine of Linlathen, by his writings, proves himself to have been essentially a pioneer in the development of Religious Thought in Scotland; and therefore, though much of his work was of a tentative nature, yet his influence in directing and moulding Scottish Religious Thought has been considerable.

The history of the varied phases in the progress of Religious Thought in Scotland from 1820 to the present day can never be satisfactorily understood apart from a knowledge of the writings of Erskine.

As a pioneer of Religious Thought in Scotland Erskine has left his mark on two phases of this thought (1) on scientific religious thought; (2) on the religious thought of the pulpit, the press and the market-place.

At a time when religious thought was at a discount in the estimation of thinkers and writers and when theology was considered to have abdicated her throne as "Queen of the sciences," Erskine met these detractors in the most effective fashion, for he brought to bear on the despised subject an original and cultured mind and compelled the attention of the expert and thinker, who now perceived the need for a revision of their own thoughts and for a change of attitude. Erskine's first work, "Remarks on the Internal Evidence" bore all the evidence of an able and charitable mind, whose outlook and insight was a rebuke to the ignorant and prejudiced. According to Erskine Scottish Religious Thought, so far from being dead, was on the eve of greater discoveries. Apart from its value to Scottish Religious Thought Erskine's Remarks on the Internal Evidence was a prophecy or anticipation - though, perhaps an unconscious forecast - of the new age of science, when religious thought would be compelled to/



to face difficulties and problems hitherto unknown. The spirit of this age would insist, and has made good the claim, to examine the facts and principles of religion by the standard rigorously applied to the facts of nature. It was in accordance with this spirit that the Bible was subjected to a form of criticism which brought alarm to those who had spoken without much thought of the Bible as inerrant.

Erskine, however, not only, consciously or unconsciously anticipated this form of scientific inquiry, but he also set forth the method by which this criticism and attack might be met and repelled.

It was a valuable contribution to Scottish Religious Thought, when Erskine asserted and emphasised for the expert, and the man of ordinary capacity, the fact or reality of the Christian Consciousness.

This fact of Christian Consciousness was behind the word, "I know in whom I have believed," and the principle, or truth on which this confession rested had the same value in spiritual and moral things as the assertion of the scientist that he sees the light of the sun.

Erskine did much to dispel the mists and to destroy the false ideas which hid and distorted the glory and character of the Divine Creator, for he disentangled the Sovereignty of God from the one-sided values of the 17th century by asserting the reality of the Fatherhood of God. In this way each conception - Sovereignty and Fatherhood - was placed in its true position. Sovereignty was therefore no longer bare Will governed by inexorable logic, but Sovereignty transformed and suffused with the glowing warmth of Eternal and All-conquering Love. It was in and through such Fatherly love that men were to interpret the relations in which The Eternal stood to them and they themselves to God.

And from this conception of God in His Fatherhood

there followed a worthier and more satisfying doctrine not only of the Sonship of Jesus, but also of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

It may be difficult in those days of unlimited love and the unconditional freeness of the Gospel message for the student to understand all that Erskine achieved for Faith in its seven-fold entanglements or in behalf of Forgiveness graciously offered and so ungraciously snatched away. Faith and the Unconditional Freeness may be commonplace terms now but the commonplace of one age may have been, and, in Erskine's day, was the rallying ground for strife and conflict. Those terms "Faith" and "Unconditional Freeness", as interpreted by Erskine were indeed to many like the fire-brands of Samson, only the names of the fire-raiser and sufferers were changed. Erskine was not a Samson but a Philistine who afflicted, by his interpretations of Scripture the true Israelites of the Scottish Church! These days are past and Erskine's work is forgotten as the labours of men, who in former times began to make clearings where now there waves the autumnal golden grain. Erskine rode the marches of Faith and called for a careful, Scriptural and scientific definition; he, by his own overwhelming conception of the love of God, was lead to set to the Divine love no man-made boundaries for just as each man lives under the blue vault of heaven so no soul is ever beyond the ever present and Eternal Fatherly care and love of God.

We have seen what Erskine accomplished in order to make plain the doctrines of the Fatherhood of God, who makes no election unto life but only to gifts, who is not held in the grip of a relentless Justice, but overcomes Justice by Love, who has not sent men into the world for probation but/

but for the purpose of Education, who does not justify by freeing men from the consequences of sin, which is self-will, but shows the desert of sin in the sufferings of One, who rather than sin, for to sin is to refuse sympathy and fellowship with God, died with the words, "It is finished", for the synthesis of his life was "Not my will but thine be done". What is the inference? Is it not first of all that there is no imputed righteousness for man but only in Christ the Righteous example, which each must translate into character through love of righteousness and sympathy with the purposes of God? And the second inference is Erskine gave to the human soul a place in the Divine scheme of things which place had been denied by Calvinism, It is therefore not too much to say Erskine re-discovered the worth of human personality. This was a useful though unpopular bit of work; useful and gracious for all who chafed under the fetters of Calvinism, but unpopular and heretical to those who believed in the corruption of man's whole nature. That, Erskine did not believe, though he held man of himself could not take the first step God-ward.

It stands to Erskine's intuitive power and ability to grasp principles, so that long before the natural law in the spiritual world became a working proposition, he, tentatively, was using the principle and in Erskine's tentative working there are hints, and lines of thought, and exposition which in modern form, so far as Scottish Religious Thought is concerned, find expression and approval in the words of Professor Bowman. pp. 254.

Erskine's attitude towards the Bible was based on the fact that not only was the Christ of the Creeds different from the Christ of the Gospels, but also the Christ of the/

the Gospels was less in glory, majesty, grace and power than the Jesus who had incorporated Himself in humanity even before men had begun to record the revelations of the Spirit of God which constitute the Scriptures. These were strong statements and to the orthodox were the words of an heretic or iconoclast. Inerrancy was held to be the glory of the Word, but to this Erskine replied Protestantism had dethroned an infallible Pope, but enthroned on infallible Bible, Erskine recognised inaccuracies in the Bible; he perceived also the idea of development, and refused, as we have seen, to identify Christ with the written Word. Now, though Erskine gave little thought to modern critical methods, he saw these were inevitable, but Erskine showed the way to Scottish Religious Thought, and in part, it is due to his tentative methods and the principles which he adumbrated that there has been the sanctified and cautious development of Biblical criticism in Scotland.

Erskine may not have done much for the scientific study of the Bible but the man who lays the charge in the quarry has as definite place as the sculptor who by his genius calls a god from the stone.

Erskine has enriched Scottish Religious Thought because he brought to the study and exposition of religious facts and principles a free, inquiring, subtle and sanctified mind; his readers are often confused by his fastidiousness, since he insists on returning to a truth to give it better expression from what he thinks is another or better angle. Some of his interpretations of Scripture are far-fetched, but even though this is the case it is apparent such an interpretation could only have come from one who loved the Word and searched diligently for truth. There is a winsomeness in his method of dealing with those who thought differently from himself and a breadth of charity, which many of his opponents would have done well to have imitated. His charity was boundless, and no one surpassed him in sympathy/

sympathy towards those who refused to follow in the line of his beliefs. No one, therefore, is surprised that Erskine early in life had thoughts of Universal Restoration. The love of God so overwhelmed him that out of that love there was begotten this synthesis of his religious experience.

The idea of Universal Restoration is not of logic but of the heart. Religion to Erskine was as simple and natural as the love of a child for his mother and, if a mother's love remains steadfast, when all other forms of love fail, how much greater is the love of God who created man in his own image.

Erskine deplored divisions in the Church, the body of Christ: he saw the mistakes made by both sides and, perhaps, he felt the best contribution he could bring to the common stock was his effort to clarify religious thought, for, if the body of Christ, sadly disrupted, is to become one, there must be unity of thought before unity of feeling; and is it not a historical fact that one of the constraining forces for unity of life and purpose has been the spirit which has characterised Scottish Religious Thought? That spirit is seen at its best in Erskine who, under a sense of the love of God and obedient to the will of God, set himself to make plain to others the Divine purpose in the life of man and the world. Erskine blazed the trail and others have followed in the line of his thoughts and have added to them. Out of the development of Scottish Religious Thought there has necessarily followed the demand for unity of life, and work, without which Scottish Religious Thought would lack both purpose and thrust. Erskine began to build but as men see only in part they sometimes build better than they know.

A P P E N D I X.

(1) Thomas Erskine belonged to a race long associated with the Religious life of Scotland; his great grandfather was Colonel (Black Colonel) John Erskine of Carnock, who was the great grandson of the Regent Mar, one of the trusted counsellors of James VI of Scotland.

The Black Colonel was of the party which was formed to rid the Church of Scotland of Professor Simson's "Affair".

John Erskine, the son of Colonel Erskine was Professor of Scots Law in the University of Edinburgh and was known as the Blackstone, of Scotland.

The son of the author of the Institutes became Dr. John Erskine of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, a leader of the Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and his defence of Foreign Missions in the notorious assembly of 1796 is still remembered. Dr. John Erskine when at Culross, 1754, wrote a foreword to Maclaurin's works - (Edinburgh; 1818: Alexander & Thomson). "I account it", he writes, "one of the most pleasant and happy circumstances of my life that for eleven years the eminent servant of Christ, honoured me with his friendship and often profited me by his instruction and advice".

Dr. Erskine ... partially disinherited by his father (the Blackstone of Scottish Jurisprudence) because he had declined the profession of the law and assumed that of minister. (Page 140, Lives of the Haldanes).

The opponents of Erskine at the time of the deposition of McLeod Campbell endeavoured to identify the spirit of the minority of the Church of Scotland in favour of McLeod Campbell with this of the Tractarian movement. This is wide of the mark either of any mutual understanding or of the subject-matter.

(2) Puseyism, as a spiritual movement, was not favoured by Erskine since it meant in essence the substitution of authority for /

for individual independent judgment based on a consciousness of what is right since this very consciousness of knowing what is right left "me out, as far as those things are "concerned in which I discern a positive right, from under any other authority than the Fountain of right - then God"? V.2 pp: 200 Letters.

The Root of Puseyism to Erskine was in Popery only the former did not go so far; Quakerism was the supplement - the opposite pole of Popery since it denies the light that lighteth every man and therefore authority must be put in its place, Puseyism and Irvingism was a return to Judaism in the estimation of Erskine 202 pp. Letters v.2.

(3) Dr. Andrew Thomson denied the validity of Erskine's position in regard to Universal Pardon; he did this in a sermon entitled 'The Doctrine of Universal Pardon' (Edin. 1831: 2nd Edition Whyte & Co.). Of this Sermon a writer in the Christian Instructor says "a work which one would think "was more than sufficient to overwhelm with shame Mr.Erskine "and his compeers in their attempts to impose on the "religious a system of doctrine which is at variance with "both reason and Scripture". 1831 pp.402.

(4) Erskine's sympathy with and belief in those who claimed to possess the gift of tongues was a source of great offence, on page 502 and 503 of the Christian Instructor, we have the following - "Mr.Thomas Erskine whose name has sunk into a mere index for whatever is rash, silly, extravagant and in Scriptural in doctrinal alatement. And in a Review of a Vindication of the Religion of the Land the Rev. A.Robertson 1830, the reviewer writes, "we dare say, Mr.Robertson did "not flatter himself that he could reach an understanding "so encased in absurdity, and dogmatism and self complacency "as is that of Mr.Erskine; or that he could make any impres- "sion on a gentleman so perpetually surrounded as he is with "the/



"the female trumpery which is at present the plague and  
"pestilence of Christian Society".

(5) In the Essays of James Smith, Dundee, we find a width of thought in regard to Election but a complete ignorance of Scientific Bible study as now understood.

"The doctrine of Election is clearly stated in the Scriptures and perfectly consistent with reason. The divine omniscience must comprehend all things past and present, and to come. But there are many things affirmed, by eminent writers, on this subject, which I am incapable to reconcile, with the perfections of God and the express testimony of Scriptures. In the Scriptures, it is recorded that Christ Jesus offered up Himself a sin-offering unto God for man; and that our justification is founded on his atonement; but I cannot find any divine warrant to follow those who affirm, that our sins were imputed to the illustrious sufferer; so that he appeared as a criminal in the sight of God, as the vilest sinner; or that his righteousness is imputed to every believer; so that he appears before his Maker, as righteous as our Lord Jesus. His righteousness is the meritorious cause, our justification the effect; but it is as absurd to maintain, that we cannot receive the effect, unless the cause be imputed; as it would be to affirm, that we cannot live and breathe in the air, unless the power and wisdom of the Creator be imputed to us." Essays, p.136, on First Principles of Christianity.

(6) Erskine's letters of consolation finds striking likeness in the "Counsels of an Invalid" by James Wilson, M.D., the friend of Dr. John Brown. In Mr. Wilson's letters there are the same longings of Erskine in regard to Universal/

Universal Restoration though not so dogmatic. The writers are kindred spirits.

(7) In the case of the damned. Here, here you may have a strange, an heart-affecting view of sin's ugly face. See the poor wretches lying in bundles, boiling eternally in that stream of brimstone, roaring under the intolerable, and yet eternal anguish of their spirits.

Halyburton's "Great Concern" p. 48.

(8) Drummond, says his biographer, asserted the two sets of laws "Natural and Spiritual) to be identical "And adds this "is the best place to notice a coincidence in regard to "Drummond's grandfather who died in 1824 and left some reflections on religious matters. Would it not be strange "if it turned out that the laws of Nature and of the "Spiritual World were the same"? The Internal Evidence was issued in 1820 and in it Erskine adumbrates the same idea. Life (Smith) p.141.

(9) In the life of Dr. Robertson of Irvine there is a specimen of how the ordinary Scottish mind turns to think out the mysterious in life; he was visiting a newly made widow, but, she, instead of receiving the consolation of the visitor, "started certain difficulties of a philosophical "kind which she said had been perplexing her very much of "late. One of these is - what for had God nae beginnin'?" "What would ye bother the minister wi' sic a question as that "for?" said her brother; "it wad be mair like ye ifsyewad "gang regular to the kirk than tak up yer mind wi' nonsense "like that". "It's nae nonsense said the widow, "it's a "question I'm sair troubled wi'. What for had God nae "beginnin? I can understand his havin' nae end, for I can "think on and on, and no stop. But that He had nae beginnin' I canna get it ava". "An awfu' question that!" exclaimed the brother at last losing all patience, "what for had "God nae/

"nae beginnin'? For a very good reason. He had no need  
"o' ane; He was there already".

(10) In a full criticism of Erskine's unconditional Freeness by the Christian Instructor - Vol. 27 pp. 410, 847 there are strictures placed on Erskine's assertion that since pardon is granted before it is asked therefore prayer is a request to possess a sense of pardon. The same criticism objects to the distinctions drawn between Salvation and Pardon as frivolous and even refined; the critic also pours ridicule on the idea that salvation as set forth in the Catechism can ever be regarded in the light of a reward or a suspicion of good works. All this criticism has some elemental truth but the critic passes over the main issue. The Fatherhood of God, and fastens on the glory of God which is called for by reason of the Divine Sovereignty.

(11) In the Christian Instructor January 1832 pp.9 a writer - Uriel from Kirkden, says in regard to The Unconditional Freeness such novel views are brought forward as tend to obscure and pervert the Gospel instead of illustrating it and enforcing it. "I am surprised that the author himself cannot perceive how crude and indistinct and inaccurate those statements are". "Again this writer makes a distinction, but a gratuitous one between pardon and salvation, as if a sinner could be a partaker of the former and yet remain uninterested in the latter". This writer misses the difference between a fact and knowledge of a fact as an experience.

(12) In a Review of Thomson's Questions Preparatory to the Communion pp.846 The Christian Instructor Decr.1828,  
a/

writer makes reference to Erskine's statement in regard to the practice so prevalent in this country of communicating religious instructions through the medium of catechisms and quotes words from the Remarks on the Internal Evidence "that the ideas of most people on this subject (Christianity) "are derived almost entirely from creeds and catechisms and "church articles of some kind. The evil consequences arising "from this are most grievous". The Reviewer goes on to say that an example of what Erskine calls "most grievous" is in the comparison of the methods in which the Doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement, are stated in the Holy Scriptures and in the creeds, catechisms and church articles. "In the Holy Scriptures, Erskine says, "they stand as indications "of the character of God and as the exciting motives of a "corresponding character in man"; in the catechisms "they "stand as unrelated facts of a strange and unintelligible "nature, and apt even to suggest the idea that Christianity "holds out a premium for believing improbabilities". Further the reviewer condemns Erskine for asserting that the doctrine of the Trinity and the Atonement are as stated in the creeds and catechisms as examples "of the mode in which the truth "of God has been perverted by passing through the hands of "men in the formation of creeds and catechisms": over against Erskine's assertion the "reviewer states the people of "Scotland take their religion from the Bible; and turning "the attack on Erskine condemns the methods adopted by "Erskine and his friends in the evening Sabbath Schools where "extempore catechising produced by themselves at the moment "is preferred to catechisms which have been carefully constructed by men of sound piety. And in regard to results "the Sabbath School where the catechism is used has orderliness and quietness instead of the inattention and lack of "precision in the other".

(13) In a Review of the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel/

Gospel in the Christian Instructor Vol. 27; pp. 410, 847, a writer pours mild scorn on the various commentators of the Scriptures and adds "these commentators find of course adherents and admirers in that community". "And these, with characteristic enthusiasm, eulogise and commend to one another the new view, or the new illustrations of their favourite authors. This not infrequently gives rise to confidentially converzazione meetings of those, who are like minded, and, who love speaking and who have become acquainted with some preacher, or writer or system-maker of recent appearance, to whose judgment is authority in all spiritual matters. Thus they become the heads or idols of many good and sincere Christian people, who are fond of the excitement of novelty".

This reviewer is specially hard on Erskine's view of pardon. "Christ is laid down at every door";

Heaven to the reviewer is a place not a state".

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in

"Heaven". "Hell is also a place not a condition of heart."

"How can we escape the damnation of Hell"?

(14) The reviewer denies Erskine's assertion that the Gospel message is for the world "God so loved the world" and the reviewers proof for this is that our Lord did not mean all mankind individually since the translation of "world" meant frequently all mankind generally without any restrictions to character. There is the phrase in French "tout le monde"; or the saying of the Pharisees "Behold the world is gone after Him" or Christ's own words "I have spoken openly to the world" or the command "Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature". "We think", he adds "that it will be acknowledged by every unprejudiced reader of the Bible that the term world is not intended by either our Lord or his Apostles to be so specific in its import as our/

our author imagines it to include every human being", and seemingly to clench the argument, the writer adds, "according to this principle laid down by our author, Christ shall have a redeemed people in misery hereafter - all without exception being redemmed by Him!"

(15) "Before we conclude we must acknowledge that though we "differ widely from Mr. Erskine in many of his positions, "we like exceedingly the manner in which he has conducted "his treatise, there are an ease and an elegance and a "felicity in the diction and a glowing spirit of Christian "piety and benevolence in the sentiments, which cannot but "make the happiest impression on the mind of every Christian "rader, however, differently he may view some of the points "discussed".

It is perfectly evident that this reviewer failed to grasp the wider significance of the Fatherhood of God behind the Unconditional Freeness and had no place in his thoughts for spiritual development as that phrase is now understood. The Christian Instructor 1831 pp.610 in its ardour to criticise Erskine seeks to place the saintly Brainerd over against Erskine whose "enthusiasm" was well known. "Brainerd "detested enthusiasm in all its forms and operations".

(16) The explanation for the phenomenal sale of Erskine's books - especially, "The Remarks" and The Unconditional Freeness is stated by the same critic - "a Society for the diffusing the works of Erskine", existed.

(17) In a sermon by the Rev. William Fleming D.D.pp.43 Atkinson & Co. Glasgow at the ordination of the Rev, John Lawrie, Row (1832) there is direct evidence that the works of Erskine were having their influence. The sermon seeks to/

to make good.

- (1) The Internal Evidence may lead to the full assurance of understanding.
- (2) The External Evidence may lead to the free assurance of Faith,
- (3) The Experimental Evidence may lead to the full assurance of hope.

--- "ill instructed theologians confound the assurance of "hope with that of faith" and so, many an inquiring mind has been misled and has been driven to make shipwreck by their faith.

(17a) Erskine was greatly shocked at the treatment meted out to his friend McLeod Campbell by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In regard to this another Critic writes on "Last Assembly vindicated" 1832 pp. 21 Christian Instructor "and really it was too much to expect that "Mr. Campbell though not forced to be an ambassdor of John "Calvin should be permitted by the Assembly to remain in the "equally unconstitutional and far more dangerous capacity of "an ambassador of Thomas Erskine, or Edward Irving".

(18) "Uriel of Kirkden" Christian Instructor 1832 pp.9 enumerates several reasons for the rejection of The Unconditional Freeness.

- (1) Universal pardon is subversive of all morality.
- (2) it is subversive of the Gospel.
- (3) it renders the death of Christ nugatory and vain.
- (4) it is opposed to all that we learn from Scripture of either heaven or hell,
- (5) it is destructive to those who embrace it and act upon.

(19) "Indeed, the more we reason about the incomprehensible things of God, the more is presumptuous reason confounded; and in this confusion the enemy seeks to gain advantage over us, plies his temptations thick, and speeds his fiery darts home to the heart, which feels hurt and wounded by his injurious/

injurious excursions". "If God be so Sovereign, he alleges, "what can human endeavours avail?" If we are not among the chosen, can we baffle eternal predetermination and force our way to heaven in defiance of an immutable decree? When thus assaulted how severe to fall back on this stronghold of consolation - "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise "cast out" pp.261. "None cast out", Sieveright: Kennedy 1856: Edinburgh.

(20) There is a Theology of the atonement, but theology is only an endeavour after a system, requiring revision and relatment periodically to be in line with new attainments. (Peyton's Memorabilia of Jesus) when truth is hardened up into articles and articles squared into a system they stifle research. But still in the process of hardening and squaring they start inquiries - they supply a basis from which to explore the Divine country, a base line for triangulations. Ideas of imputation and substitution are supposed to explain the whole mystery and they have done essential service, and brought us so far, but they must take their place alongside of other theories of the interference of Christ's death in our affairs, by which we shall make nearer approach to the reality. It is sufficient to accent the fact that the death of Christ is an interference, a mediation, a something which touches heaven as it touches earth, which we may call the new Moral Force .... we know the place of the death of Christ as sovereign in the world of souls pp. 116.

(21) Take a definite conception of the old world symbol of cleansing which is reproduced in Christian prayers and hymns. The blood of Jesus Christ. His Son cleanseth us from all sin. The cleansing is a fellowship in life .... To be housed with Christ is to be in the societies of His life. It is the truth of mysticism that we live in God. 126 p.

(22)/



(22) pp. 180. There is plenty of sin in the world and the sinner soon learns that if he does not pay his debts, heaven will pay them for him with compound interest in prisons and remorse,

(23) 181. There is a coarse grain in a child which is abundantly known as original sin, and there is a fine grain which I venture to term original goodness.

(24) 350. Call election spiritual selection and you will understand it as the method of which a specialised type of character for a new period is obtained a procedure which has its counterpart in the natural world. Calvinism is quite reasonable. When Wesley, said to Whitefield, Your God is my devil, he had felt keenly that Whitefield's doctrine of the divine sovereignty made God's action despotic in the disposal of man. Wesley does not improve upon Whitefield by making the human sovereignty supreme. Man is a poor creature to be the sovereign of his own destiny. But election is natural selection for a new order of humanity.

(25) A practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, W. McGill D.D. Edin. 1786. "The Burgher Associate Synod's Warning against Socianism."

Remarks on a Sermon preached 5th Nov. 1788 by The Rev. William Peebles, Minister at Newton-upon-Ayr, W. McGill, D.D. Edin. 1786.

Dr. McGill set himself to explain the Atonement but in doing so fell into several palpable errors; he anticipated in some ways the position of F.D. Maurice. There was much loose thinking in the Essay and perhaps unwittingly the author gave too many hostages to Socianism. His friend and neighbour the Rev. Wm. Peebles accused McGill of giving up the doctrine of Substitution and calling in question the principle which related to questions/

questions and creeds. McGill favoured one formula - "Thou art the Christ the Son of God". McGill shows The Westminster Confession of Faith was adopted by the General Assembly in 1647, yet no subscription to it was required till the year 1693. Mr. Peebles quotes the Formula of the Church first introduced in 1711 which however did not become a standing law of the Church till about the year 1782 and carried against the sense of a majority of the Presbyteries of Scotland.

Burns was an admirer of McGill. Letter to Mrs. Dunlop Nov. 4: 1787; also The Kirk's Alarm - a ballad.

(26) A favourite method of dealing with "Enthusiasts" and "heretics" was to state the disputed views without any reference to the author. In the lives of (The Haldanes pp. 131 Haldane: Edinburgh 1855: Kennedy) we have the following words - Mr. Stewart's Conversion was followed by a remarkable revival in his parish and neighbourhood, and he gave so much countenance to itinerant preaching, that his biographer the late Dr. Sieveright, with more of worldly policy than of Christian simplicity, actually deemed it prudent, more than 20 years afterwards to veil Mr. James Haldane's name under the initial H., although the biographer was recording letters in which Mr. Stewart himself expressly names this honoured servant of the Lord as a "Messenger of Grace" to his soul.

(27) The Smiddyward Prayer meeting:

"Mr. Macrory conducted the opening Services, and then "read and expounded a Chapter, making sundry very pointed "applications; and leaving it to be clearly understood that "the cold morality which was droned into the ears of the people "from sabbath to sabbath, was of no avail to save either "the teacher or the taught from everlasting perdition".

Johnny Gibb p. 74.

(28)/

(28) In the autumn of 1803 when this passion for literature seems to have been in unusually strong development, it fell to his lot to preach before the Professor and students upon the text John 17:3. The discourse though perfectly orthodox, contained a somewhat scanty illustration of Christian doctrine, and was throughout cast in a more philosophical mould than was usual in the Hall in those days. It elicited some severe criticism and not less from a minister of standing and influence who happened to be present. Memoir of John Brown pp.46.

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(29) The sanguine mind may fondly imagine Philosophy to contribute some help in the Christendom of the Future to undo, by a comprehensive conciliation, a part of its own work of excessive elaboration of dogmatic form of thought and expression in the Christendom of the Past; and thus to atone for the increasing anarchy of sects, which speculation has encouraged in the Church, by a revision of theological science which should distinguish dogmatic forms that are essentially exclusive from those which may coexist in thought. For the Church towards the ideal of Christian science, we look with more hope to the presence and slowly diffused influence of individual minds, of the comprehensive type and animated with the Christian spirit, than to any synod of conclave of theologians formally met to adjust doctrinal difficulties.

(30) Principal Scott was one of the remarkable scholars of his day; he was the son of the Rev. Dr. Scott of Greenock. Erskine and Principal Scott met for the first time in 1826 when Scott was attending some classes in the Edinburgh University and was acting as tutor in the family of one of Erskine's/

Erskine's friends. When a licensed preacher of the Church of Scotland he refused to sign the Confession and at the time of deposition of McLeod Campbell Scott was deprived of his licence. For a time he acted as assistant to Edward Irving in London but being unable to accept the Irvingite principles he resigned his post.

Erskine was a most faithful friend to Scott. It was through Erskine's influence that Scott obtained an appointment as Professor of Literature in London 1848 and when Scott was an applicant for one of the Chairs in Edinburgh University Erskine attributes the failure of his candidature to the influence of the Free Church. In 1850 he was appointed Principal of Owens College, Manchester. It is an interesting fact that Principal Scott was a member of the church in which George McDonald was minister.

Very scanty are the writings, which Scott left, but his lectures to the Edinburgh Philosophical Society - 1850 four lectures on "The existing elements of English Society historically considered", 1851, four lectures on "The Progress of Mental Philosophy", and four lectures on "The General Literature of the Period" - were highly prized. In 1853 he gave the Introductory Address to the Course.

(31) It is not surprising that the nephew of Dr. John Erskine should hold advanced views in regard to the work of missions in other lands. In a communication to Maurice, Erskine states the principles on which all such work ought to be based (pp.v2 125) --- missionaries "should not weary themselves by attempting to displace one set of dogmas and substitute another but that they might commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, by declaring the Common Father, who is drawing all men into fellowship with Himself by the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. If they claimed/

claimed all honesty and truthfulness and kindness - every act of self-sacrificing generosity and uprightness - as Christianity, they could not fail meeting a response in every heart" ... "They speak of traces of humanity being most visible in all faiths and forms - why not say humanity is Christianity? And this, every man who feels the difference between himself and the brutes is not only capable of apprehending but has a latent desire to apprehend". "Thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence it cometh and whither it leadeth".

(32) "If the present contentions that the Biblical writers were not familiar with the idea of Eternity is in reality a sound one, then the idea of hidden unknown or undefined time expressed by the suggested renderings might be faithful to the original even when the reference is to the Divine Being, however strange such language might seem to us. The question is, which set of renderings gives the most consistent and the more intelligible renderings throughout. Can the inelastic idea of endless duration be reasonably and intelligibly fitted into all the various passages or must we use the elastic idea of hidden time for this purpose? And even if this should be decided in favour of the Revised Version renderings, there remains the ultimate question - to be decided not solely upon this experiment of renderings but upon the whole argument and all the facts of the case - the question, namely, whether the idea of eternity, or the idea of hidden time, of the hidden past or the hidden future, was the one familiar to the writers of the Scriptures when they thought of the far distant past or the far distant future".  
page 204, Scotch Sermons; page 324 Eternity, etc.

(33) If we have truly discerned that the supreme purpose of the world is discipline and that the supreme guidance through /

through its perplexities is duty, we have the foundation of all harmony. Oman's Vision and Authority, page 49.

That which at once opens wide to light and closes instinctively to harm, is not any regulation, though it were from the most enlightened and best of men, but the sensitive conscience which is as quick to open at the call of duty as to close at the approach of evil. Ibid, page 55. The foundation of faith must be a belief in the unity of our experience. Ibid, page 70.

"I say unto you" did not end inquiry but begin it. Hear something it said, which the humble heart will recognise as true, and which experience of obedience will confirm.

(34) "Creed must lie, not where the system is most completely articulated, but where the experience of the faithful is most assured". Ibid, page 211.

"The might which is irresistible because it breaks what it cannot bend, is not the greatest". Ibid, page 237.

(35) "About this period the incipient heresis of Mr. Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, which have since been more fatally developed into a denial of the vital doctrine of vicarious sacrificial atonement, as well as the erroneous doctrines of Mr. Campbell of Row induced him (Haldane) to write "observations on Universal Pardon, the Extent of the Atonement and Personal Assurance of Salvation", page 554. Lives of the Haldanes.

(36) That Erskine's views were taking root, we may see in Candlish's Scripture Characters, page 490, "we tell you not of salvation contained in a proposition, but of salvation treasured up in a person. We proclaim no general amnesty or indiscriminate jail delivery, purchased for men at large by Christ; but we set before you Christ Himself, and we assure /

assure all that come to Him of pardon, peace and eternal life. We do not merely tell you the infinite amount of merit and atoning virtue ... And we tell you further, that with any questions as to what there may be in Christ - for you or for any - while not coming unto Him we have no concern. It is presumptuous to ask such questions; it would be vain and useless to have them answered".

(37) The gift of Tongues in which Erskine for a time believed and sincerely afterwards disowned is thus referred to in a letter of Dr. Andrew Thomson (Life of Haldanes, page 531).

You have heard, I suppose, of the doings in the West of Scotland. Mary Campbell (afterwards Mrs. Caird) etc., has got the gift of tongues. Mary speaks and writes in foreign languages, which nobody can interpret. I have seen a specimen of one of them. It looks like the Chinese character, but it is arrant nonsense. The folks are actually mad. In this marvellous thing many believe - a writer to the signet, an advocate, Thomas Erskine himself, Rev. Mr. Campbell of Row, it is said, and foolish girls and old women innumerable. Is not all this melancholy? The tumour has not come to a head (as they say) and must be laid open and discussed".

(38) On the death of Mr. Robert Haldane, the Edinburgh witness in a tribute (February, 1851) places on record the great services of Mr. Haldane and in doing so, casts a light on the orthodox views of Scripture - "but if there be one service more important than another that Robert Haldane has performed, we should name his labours in the great cause of plenary inspiration, the magnitude of which is every day more fully coming into view".

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